



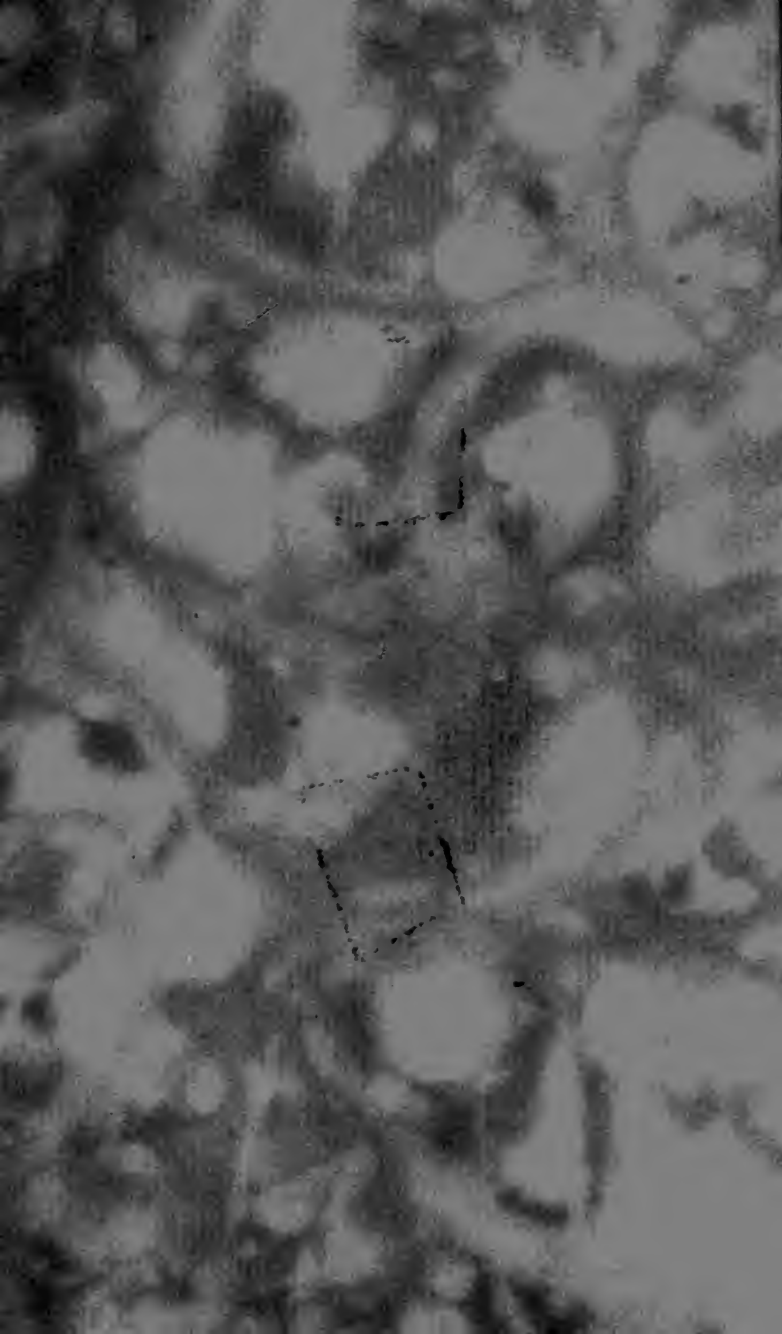


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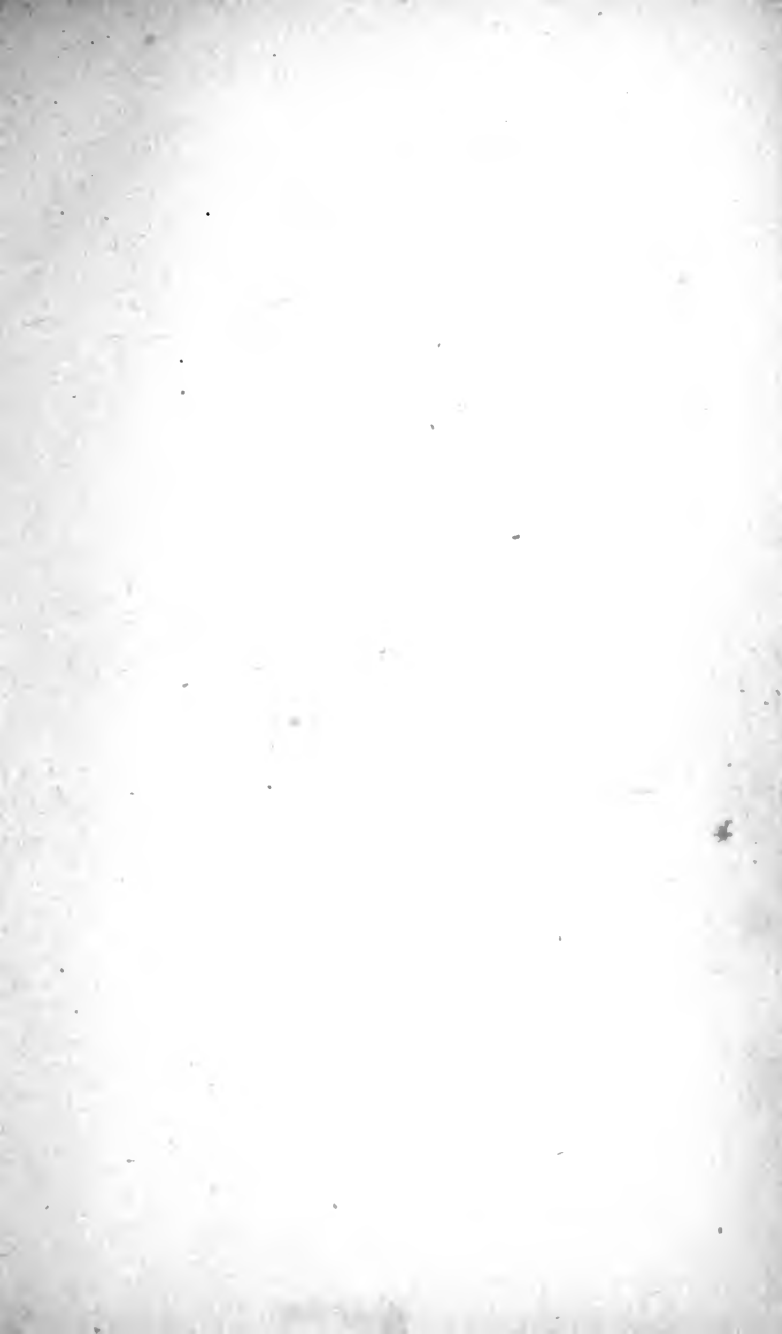
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HEIDELBERG.



VOL. II.

HEIDELBERG.

A Romance.

BY

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"THE SMUGGLER;" "ARRAH NEIL;" "THE STEP-MOTHER;"

ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

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HEIDELBERG.

CHAPTER I.

IN a large and stately chamber of one of the older parts of the castle at Heidelberg sat a lady of the middle age, about half an hour after Algernon Grey had been removed from the presence of the Elector. The room was a long parallelogram, tapestried all round with richly worked hangings, representing, in glowing colours and somewhat warm designs, the loves of Vertumnus and Pomona. Few specimens of that now abandoned branch of needlework could compete with those which were there displayed. The flowers and the fruit

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seemed to stand out from the background ; the rich clusters of the grape and apple, the leaves of the trees, and the very birds upon the branches, all seemed to project into the chamber, and gave it the air of an arbour : while the forms of the garden goddess and her changeful lover were displayed with a truth and energy which, though not all offensive to the less delicate eyes of those days, would be judged rather indecorous in our own. This fine suite of tapestry had not been treated with much reverence by the hands that hung it up ; for over each door, and there were three in the walls, a piece of the same size had been cut out and bordered with gilt leather—much to the inconvenience of the legs of Vertumnus in one instance, and to the waist and arms of Pomona in another—for the purpose of nailing the slips so detached to the door, the opening and closing of which were thus greatly facilitated. The ceiling above was of dark oak, richly wrought in pentagons, which, rising one above the other, diminishing as they came forward and

ending with a spot of gold in the centre, took the shape of stars to the eye below, before it had time to trace out the elaborate workmanship; and from the central pentagon hung a large rich gilt lustre of twelve lights. Chairs covered with crimson velvet, tables with spiral legs and inlaid tops, a small mossy carpet for the feet in one corner of the room, a lute, a number of books, amongst which were several huge folios, and a quantity of very fine rare porcelain, made up the furniture of the chamber, which, though the light was by no means strong, even on a summer morning, had an air of comfort and calm state about it, which was pleasant and impressive to the eye.

There is a general harmony in all things, which we seldom see violated—or rather, perhaps, I should say, things naturally fall into harmony, and are never long in adapting themselves harmoniously to each other. The man and his dress, the room and its tenant, the church and the worship there celebrated, have all their peculiar fitness to each other; and so

it was in this instance; for the lady, who was there seated, was exactly what one would have expected to find in that place. She was a woman of a grave and thoughtful aspect, tempered by a kindly look about the mouth, though the brow was firm and thoughtful, and the eyes clear and very bright. The lightness of youth was gone; and, if she could not exactly be called graceful, she was dignified; and yet there was the ease of high birth and high education, which is in itself a kind of grace, and the dignified carriage was softened by an occasional touch of homeliness of manner the most remote from vulgarity or coarseness. She was large in person, though not very tall; and the fine cutting of the mouth, the dimpled chin, and the small, though somewhat aquiline nose, displayed some pretensions still to that beauty, which courtiers had celebrated in her younger days. Her dress was very peculiar, consisting of a gown of black velvet, covered down the front and on the arms with embroidery of the same sombre colour; and, from

the neck to the bosom, she wore a tucker of the most magnificent white lace. Above this, round the neck, was a large frill of plain white muslin; while springing from the shoulders was a sort of black silk wimple or hood, much in the form of a cockle-shell, stiffened with whalebone, and ready to receive the head and neck, ruff and all. The coif consisted of a piece of black velvet trimmed round with lace, fastened to the hair behind, and brought over the head in a peak upon the wide-extended forehead, from which the hair was drawn back, so as to leave the whole brow completely exposed.

Such was the dress and appearance of the Electress Dowager, Louisa Juliana, sister of the famous William, Prince of Orange, one of the most remarkable and clear-sighted women of her day; and I have thought it fit to dwell thus far upon the mere description of her person and habiliments, inasmuch as portraits of this Princess are very rare, and no description, that I know, exists.

At the moment I speak of, she had just seated herself in a great chair, and taken up a book; while one of her waiting-maids, who had run forth from her dressing-room by the door on the left hand, was thrusting another large pin into the black velvet coif to fasten it more securely to her hair, a precaution which, it seems, she had neglected while actually at her toilet. When she had done, the Electress looked up, inquiring, "Have you sent to my cousin, the Lady Agnes?"

"Eldrida is gone, may it please your Highness," said the maid with a low reverence, and withdrew.

The reader will remark that the Electress Dowager applied the name of cousin to the person of whom she spoke; but it must not be thence inferred that they stood in a very close degree of consanguinity to each other, for the lady to whom she sent was no other than Agnes Herbert; and it was common in those days, for high personages, either as a mark of reve-

rence or love, to give the name of cousin to others of inferior station in no degree related to them.

For about five minutes Louisa Juliana continued to read with a somewhat careless and inattentive air, as if she were merely seeking to occupy a short space of time with the semblance of some employment, while her thoughts were really busied with other things. At the end of that period a light tap was heard at the door—not the great entrance which issued forth on the corridor and the stairs, but that of the dressing-room—and the next instant Agnes Herbert entered and approached the chair of the Princess. She had changed her dress since her return; and though, perhaps, her face was a shade paler than it had been before all the adventures of the preceding day, yet her exceeding loveliness was not diminished, even if the character of her beauty was somewhat changed.

The Electress rose partly from her seat as soon as she saw her; and when Agnes bent,

almost kneeling at her feet, she cast her arms round her and pressed her warmly to her heart.

“Welcome, welcome, my sweet child,” she cried; “I thought that fate, after taking from me so much and so many that I loved, had deprived me also of my Agnes. Oh, my dear girl! you cannot fancy the anguish of my heart during many a long hour last night. Seeing what I suffered, they came to my bedside at one this morning, and told me that, by some miracle, you had been saved. I would scarcely believe the tidings, loved one; and till I heard just now that you had returned, a shade of unbelief would linger in my mind.”

“I should have been here ere now, your Highness,” answered Agnes, “as bound in duty and in love, had not a matter of importance called me to the presence of the Elector. My deliverance was, indeed, a miracle, though yet one should scarcely say so, when it was brought about by that which should be as frequent as

it is seldom, the gallantry and devotion of a gentleman and a courtier."

"Nay, sit you down here, my Agnes, and tell me all your marvels," said the Electress; "for as yet I have heard nought of the story. Indeed, I believe all in the castle are as ignorant as myself."

"Not now," replied Agnes; "in different forms, part truth and part falsehood, it has spread, I find, far and near. But I will tell you all, noble lady, exactly as it happened; for it is a pleasant task when one has nought but gratitude and praise to speak;" and, with more minute details than even she had indulged in towards Herbert, the fair girl proceeded to relate to her high friend all that had occurred since she had left her on the preceding day, till the moment she had left the Elector's presence. I have said "all;" but there were two things which she omitted: William Lovet's praises of his cousin, and the keen questions which her uncle had put to her on her return. For some reason, she knew not what herself, she spoke

not on these two themes, but all the rest was told.

Louisa Juliana listened with thoughtful, earnest attention; her countenance did not vary much, for she was habituated to command its expression; but still there were particular parts on which she seemed to ponder more than others. All Agnes said of her escape from the imminent peril of death, and of him who had delivered her, she seemed to mark peculiarly; but, at the story of his arrest and what had followed, she took apparently but little heed, merely saying: "It will be found that Oberntraut provoked it."

When the young lady had done, she laid her hand upon her shoulder and kissed her brow, thanking her for her tale, and adding, "This is indeed a noble and a generous man, my Agnes; and I must see him and tell him what I think, for your sake, my sweet cousin."

"But he is in prison," answered Agnes; "and, I fear, may not be enlarged for a long time."

"I must see him, nevertheless," replied the

Electress, thoughtfully, "on many accounts, dear girl—" she paused, and seemed to meditate a moment or two, after which she added, "I had heard of his being here before, Agnes—nay, you yourself told me of his demeanour the other night, but it is not that alone; a hint has reached my ears, that he has more objects than one, that he is not merely a traveller for pleasure; and this calm and thoughtful character in one so young bespeaks, methinks, a brain burdened with weighty matters. My son, I can see, judges the same,—he denies not that he knows him, and that he is not exactly what he seems.—I must see him, Agnes; and that, too, as speedily as may be."

"But how, dear lady?" inquired Agnes Herbert.

"Oh, that will be easy," answered the Electress; "your uncle has him in custody, you say; well, you shall be his turnkey for the night, and bring him forth to take the air upon the walls, or in the gardens; then lead him out beneath my windows, which shall be open; and, when

you hear my little silver bell, conduct him hither by the small staircase in the tower.—I must know more of his errand, Agnes; and, if it be what I think, I may find cause for a long conference. The fate of my son and his whole house, the fate of Germany, nay, perhaps of Europe, is now in the balance, and I would fain prevent any fresh weight being thrown into the wrong scale. Wait till night has fallen, and I will ring my bell some time before ten.—Tell Herbert you have my commands.”

“Which shall be obeyed, depend upon it, madam,” answered the young lady, and then remained silent, as if waiting to receive any further directions.

“And so you are doubtless very grateful to this young cavalier, my Agnes,” said the Princess, at length.

“What would I not do to show my thankfulness!” cried the fair enthusiastic girl.

“Anything in reason, child,” replied the elder lady; “but let not gratitude carry you too far in your young fancies. The saving of

a life may be paid too dearly by the peace of the heart."

Agnes smiled gaily. "Oh, no fear of that, noble lady," she answered: "he is no love-maker; and if I could thank him for anything more earnestly than for his chivalrous deliverance, it would be for his kind, calm, brotherly treatment throughout yesternight, without one word or look that the vainest heart could construe into gallantry."

"Strange conduct for so young a man! Strange gratitude for so fair a girl!" replied the Electress, laughing. "Yet be not too sure of yourself or him, dear child. Love may be heaping up the fuel before he sets the flame to the pile. Mark me, my Agnes, and do not let your cheek glow so warmly. I do not tell you not to love: that were both vain and dangerous: I only say, know him better before you do. All I have heard of him speaks well, and marks him out for no ordinary man; but yet it is right, when gratitude is so warm in a young heart, to take care

that it lights up no other flame without our knowing it. Yours is a rich fancy, my Agnes, and an ardent spirit; and my good cousin Herbert is not so careful as a mother."

"Oh, he is more careful than you deem him," replied the young lady, with a faint smile at the remembrance of his questions; "he interrogated me as strictly this morning as a grand inquisitor; would know all my companion's words and acts towards me, even to the smallest trifle."

"But asked you nothing of your own, I will warrant," said the Princess: "that is his character, my child. All the English are theoretical, and he has his system, good as far as it goes, but often carried too far, and often inapplicable. Because he met with one woman in life who was an angel, if ever one dwelt on earth, and has known few others, his rule would seem to be to trust all women, and to doubt all men. But my advice, my Agnes, to every young being placed as you are, would be, to doubt yourself and ever to fly danger!"

“And do *you* doubt me, dear lady?” asked Agnes, almost mournfully.

The Princess cast her arm round her, exclaiming, “No, dear girl! No! I would doubt myself sooner; but what I have said was yet in kindness, Agnes. This same gratitude often leads on along a flowery path into a wilderness. Sweet smiling blossoms strew the path at first, and as we gather them we go forward farther than we know; till, frightened at the growing desolation round, we would turn back and then find the way shut with thorns and brambles. I say, beware, my sweet child, till you have known him longer, better, nearer. Then if he seek to win your heart, and you can give it, let it be so; for I am not one to undervalue the worth of true and honest love. It may have its pains; but I do believe that woman’s life, at least, is not complete till she has known its blessings.”

“But why should he seek to win my poor heart?” asked Agnes. “Why should I fancy that he ever will? He has never said one

word that should justify me to myself for dreaming of such a thing. Doubtless he has seen many brighter, better, fairer than myself, and will see many more. As yet I have done nought to win his love, though your Highness thinks I know he has done much to win mine ; but there is a vast difference between gratitude and love. I am too proud to love unsought, believe me ; and till he either tells me so, or I have accomplished something worthy of love from him, I will not even fancy that he can feel aught but courteous kindness to me."

"Poor child !" said the Electress, "you are a scholar of the lowest class in this same school of love, I see. You have done nought to merit love ! Have you not made yourself to him an object of eager, anxious thought and apprehension, when, whirling in the torrent, he rushed to save you ? Have you not given him cause for the display of gallant daring and fine enthusiasm ? Have you not wakened through the livelong night the tender, soft emotions of the heart for one protected,

soothed, supported? What is this but to merit love from any man? You much mistake, my Agnes, if you think men's hearts are won by that which will win woman's. Man's is a different nature, a calling unlike ours: his task to strive with danger for himself and others, to shield the feeble, and love those he shields. Ours to suffer and to shrink, to seek protection from a stronger arm, and pay with our whole hearts the price of man's support. Overwhelm him with benefits, give him wealth, distinction, a kingly crown if you have it to bestow; save him from death, or pain, or misery, still you will twine no bond around his heart so strong as that which binds it to the object of his care or pity. But enough of this, my child, I would but warn you; for every woman carries a traitor in her bosom, ever ready to yield the citadel unless well watched. Bring this brave gentleman to me, as I have said, to-night. When I have seen him, I will tell you more."

Agnes retired, but she went not straight to

her uncle's tower. It was her own chamber she first sought, and there, for well nigh an hour, with her fair face resting on her hand, she remained in deep and seemingly painful meditation. I will not pause to inquire what were the busy thoughts that crossed that young and inexperienced brain ; what the emotions which filled that pure warm gentle heart. For a time her reveries were certainly bitter ones ; but then she seemed to cast them off with some strong resolution ; the clouds passed from her brow, her sparkling eye looked up, and rising with a gay laugh, she cried, " No, no ; I will not give it another thought !" and with a light step, hurried to Herbert's tower.

CHAPTER II.

IN the custody of the Grand Marshall, Algernon Grey was removed from the presence of the Elector, and passing across the hall where he had seen Agnes waiting, he was led into one of the open galleries which ran along the great court on one side, and thence by innumerable small passages, scarcely large enough for two persons to thread them abreast, to the door of a chamber which opened upon one of the landing-places of a tolerably wide staircase.

The door was low, scarcely of the height of the young Englishman's head, and covered with large bars and bands of iron, as well as heavy-headed nails. When it was opened, it dis-

played on the right-hand side a small ante-room, with a high window, opposite to which was another low-browed arch with a door, and beyond that a third door equally solid and strong with the first.

The Lord of Helinstadt, as they passed, pointed towards the arch on the left, saying, in a courteous tone : "There will be your bedroom, and here your servants can remain, if, as I trust, it be the Elector's pleasure that your usual attendants should be admitted to you." As he spoke, he led the way towards the third door ; and, turning the heavy key that was in the lock, opened it, motioning the young Englishman to go in.

Algernon Grey did so in silence, and with no very pleasant anticipations ; but he was agreeably disappointed in finding himself in a room bearing very little the aspect of a prison, cheerful in itself, and commanding that same unrivalled view, which he had beheld before from the castle grounds. In shape, the chamber was an exact half-moon ; the large round

tower in which it was situated being cut by a partition, which left this segment as a sort of wide saloon; while the other half was again divided into two, the one portion being appropriated to the purposes of a bed-room, and the second and lesser part serving as an ante-room, except a small space which was separated from the rest to contain the staircase.

The furniture of the room was costly and convenient. Nothing was wanting that could contribute to the comfort of its denizen; and Algernon Grey drew from the aspect of the whole place an augury that it was not the Elector's intention to show any very great severity towards him. The hangings, the tables, the velvet chairs, however attracted but little of his attention; for he walked at once forward to one of the three large windows, through which the full torrent of light was streaming into the room, though not indeed the sunshine; for it was yet morning, and that side of the tower looked to the south and west.

"A glorious prospect," he said, turning to

the Marshall; "methinks a day or two's sojourn here will be no great infliction. Nevertheless, I protest against the right of any one to place me in confinement for that which I have done. Endurance, however, is a serviceable quality; and the Elector's will must be obeyed; but I do trust that I shall not be left here without some attendants within call; and that my servants and baggage may be brought up from the inn, where I left them, little anticipating imprisonment."

"I will take the Elector's farther commands," replied the Lord of Helmstadt. "Of course some persons will be appointed to attend upon you; but whether your own servants, or not, I cannot say.—I must leave you alone for a time, greatly grieving that such a chance should have befallen so gallant a gentleman. We all know John of Oberntraut well; and there is not a man in all the court who doubts that he has provoked this affair; but the Elector has been very strict in such matters lately, and of course he cannot show favour even were he inclined."

Thus saying, he withdrew; and Algernon was left alone. For an instant he gazed round the room, while the key grated heavily in the lock, and then laughed in a light cheerful tone. "Here I am a captive," he said; "well, though unexpected, it is no great matter. A few short hours, a few short days, what are they from the sum of life; and, forgetting that I have lost my liberty, I will think myself a prince hospitably received, well lodged, and only, like the slave of the Harem, not suffered to go abroad. What an idle thing it is for a man to fret and wear himself with vain regrets over the loss of that shadowy thing, the portion of freedom that is left him by the usages of the world. In courts and cities, with the stiff bit of the law beneath his jaws, he is trained and curbed up by the habits of the land to go through his taught paces, like a horse in the manege, curveting here, and passaging there, with hardly a natural step in his whole allure. Here, with no eyes to watch me, with no form of restraint or customary ceremonies, I can have

more real freedom than in a king's halls, although yonder door be locked and bolted. What is it that makes imprisonment painful? Either the anticipation of farther evil as its dark termination, or the prospect of its indefinite, perhaps interminable, extent. In a few days I shall be free. They dare not do me wrong. I have nothing farther to apprehend. Why should the locking of that door jar upon my ear, when the hand that turns the key is on the outside? Had it been my own hand, ere I lay down to sleep, it would have been nothing—no, no, I will bear it lightly. Man doubles all the evils of his fate by pondering over them; a scratch becomes a wound, a slight an injury, a jest an insult, a small peril a great danger; and a light sickness often ends in death by the brooding apprehensions of the sick.—What a magnificent scene! Methinks, I could contemplate that view for ever; and, forgetting all the world, live here an anchorite in the midst of a great city, worshipping God in the grand temple of his brightest works.”

Vain, oh ! how vain is it in man to strive, by the mere power of intellect, to quell or overrule the natural affections of the heart. The stoical philosophy would have broken down instantly, had not its teachers skilfully applied emollients to its harsh sternness, teaching not alone to bear the evils that fate inflicts, but often, also, to fly from them—ay, to fly, even though the place of refuge was the tomb: for, after all, the magnificent-miened crime of suicide, was but a cowardly flight before a conquering army of the world's ills.

Vain was all the reasoning of Algernon Grey; and silently and slowly the solitary moments, as they passed, sapped the foundations of the tall edifice of lofty thoughts which he had so confidently built up. First he began to find the time go slowly; he felt delight in the beauty of the scene, it is true, but it was all still: nothing moved: the very air had fallen away, so that the leaves of the trees stirred not on the branches; and the green Neckar looked like a sheet of solid glass. He could not see into the

streets of the town ; the thickness of the walls excluded the garden below ; the sky overhead was without a cloud ; the glowing heat of the day kept the birds quiet ; and the light changed so slowly, that the creeping on of the shadow here and the sunshine there was imperceptible to the eye. The prospect was beautiful ; but it became monotonous ; and a storm or cloud would have been a relief.

He began to turn his eyes towards the door, and wished that some one would come. The knowledge that it was locked became oppressive to him ; he felt that his philosophy was failing, and he determined to find or make an occupation. He had not yet seen the bed-room ; and, walking through the door, which communicated with it, he examined the furniture it contained, looked out of the high window over the roofs of some of the buildings and against the walls of others. A pigeon, seated upon one of the gables, took flight at that moment, and whirled up into the free air. Algernon Grey knew then how much he had felt the loss of liberty ;

for to witness the bird's flight was joy to him ; and yet it woke melancholy associations. As he saw it spreading its pinions lightly in the clear sky, sweeping round in a gay circle, and then darting away to meadow or to corn-field, he thought how beautiful a thing freedom is, how terrible is its loss.

The bird disappeared ; and walking slowly back into the other chamber, he seated himself in the window and gazed out ; but bitter thoughts took possession of him ; and the mind rambled on from one sad train of images to another. He thought of human life, its griefs, its cares, its changes. He viewed it all darkly, both its accidents and its ordinary course. " What is it," he said, " but a gradual development, filled with many an evil and many a danger, a short maturity and a long and sad decay ? Scarcely have we touched our prime, when some failing power, some slackened energy, some corporeal, or some mental weakness, warns us that we are on the descent, and that all is thenceforward downward, downward to the grave. Thence-

forward the game of life is all loss. One after another we cast the dice for a new stake ; and fate is ever the winner against us ; till, bankrupt in body and in mind, we go to bed, and sleep—forgotten. Then, too, how often, even in the days of our highest energies, comes something to bar us from the treasures that we covet ; some small but fatal obstacle, over which all our hopes fall prostrate ; the eternal stumbling-block of circumstance that gives the ever-flying good time to escape us. Often !—Nay I should have said ever ; for that dark inscrutable hand of fate, still mingles with the cup of joy, even when sparkling most brightly in the hand of youth, the bitter drop that soon pervades it all.”

He turned his mind to other things. “ Well, it matters not,” he thought, “ there is surely one unalloyed pleasure, at all events,—to do good, to save, protect, befriend.” Then, for an instant, his fancy rested joyfully upon the events of the night before. He thought of Agnes Herbert—of having saved her from

destruction—of having rescued her from the dark waters of that turbulent stream—of having given back to life that creature, so full of all life's brightest energies; and, for a moment, he was happy. She rose before him in her young beauty, sparkling with graces, heart beaming from her eyes; love and happiness upon her lips; her clear, fair brow, like the expanse of heaven; and the soul of loveliness in every look and every movement. The vision was too bright; and, clasping his hands together, he fixed his eyes upon the ground, murmuring bitterly through his closed teeth: "Yet she never can be mine!"

Deep, deep and gloomy were his meditations after; and more than one hour passed by, ere he moved a single muscle; till, at length, he heard a step, and a voice speaking without; and, starting up, he strove to clear his brow, brushing back the hair from his forehead, and looking grave, but not so sad. The key was turned in the door; and the next moment, two faces, which he knew well, presented

themselves, those of Herbert and William Lovet.

Herbert stayed not long. "For the first time in life, Master Grey," he said, "I have petitioned to be a gaoler; but I have so much to thank you for, that I might well undertake that office on your behalf, to soften, as much as possible, your captivity, which will not be long, I trust. My thanks and my plans of all kinds must have greater room than I will now give to them, as your cousin is here to talk with you; but I will see you again, ere the day be over, and, in the mean time, provide for your comfort, as far as may be. So fare-you-well for the present; and, shaking him warmly by the hand, he turned to Lovet, saying: "The guard without knows your person, and will give you exit when you require it. You can come hither as often as you like during the day; but after sunset the gates of the tower, by the Elector's orders, must be closed against all visitors."

"Thanks, colonel, thanks," answered Lovet,

and gazed after him to the door, ere he spoke to his cousin. The opening of his conversation was as strange as usual; for he began with a loud burst of laughter.

“Caged, Algernon, caged!” he exclaimed. “Well, upon my life, a mighty pretty dungeon, and convenient! Velvet chairs, upon my life; and a ravishing prospect, as poets would call it. Good soup, a bottle of rich wine, and bread not too brown, and, methinks, you are comfortably provided for. On my life, I am greatly indebted to the Elector.”

“You seem to enjoy his bounty towards me, certainly,” answered Algernon Grey, with a slight touch of bitterness; “may I know, William, whether it is from kindly sympathy with my pleasures, or from personal satisfaction, you derive your merriment?”

“Oh, personal, personal!” exclaimed Lovet. “That celebrated cardinal, the son of a butcher and master of monarchs, bright Wolsey, was a frank and sincere man; and when he wrote ‘ego et rex meus,’ he only did what every

other man would do, if he were not a hypocrite, namely, put himself first, that is to say, in the place which he occupied in his own consideration. I love you second to myself, dear Algernon.—Don't tell sweet Madam de Laussitz, or her deep sleepy eyes would flash with indignation, to think that I loved any thing or any body, but her fair self. However, can you deny that I have great obligations to the Elector? Here he has caged my bird, just as I thought it was about to take flight, and that I should be obliged to follow. It answers my purpose just as well as if you had fallen in love with all the ladies of the court together, and stayed philtering in orange bowers. As to yourself, from what I know of you, the Elector's prison will be much more pleasant than Cupid's chain; and, on my life, he has put the jewel in a very snug casket. Here you are, like a poor simple Catholic girl's new crucifix, wrapped up in cotton, and laid upon a shelf, all safe and sheltered; while I, like the same poor

maiden, go wandering at large in my worldly vanities."

"Take care, William," answered Algernon Grey, "that your vanities don't get you into worse than this."

"Heaven and earth listen to the man!" exclaimed William Lovet, laughing. "Think of his preaching decorum to me! Did I not tell you long ago, Algernon, that your vices were much more serious ones than mine? Here, instead of bowing down and worshipping the embroidered hem of some fair lady's petticoat, the very first thing you do in a strange country is, to go and cut a poor man's throat. Now, I will ask you fairly and candidly, which is the worst, to amuse an hour or two in giving and receiving pleasure; or to spend your time like a wild cat in a holly bush, scratching your neighbour's heart out?—The thing won't bear an argument, cousin of mine. I am the moral and well-regulated young man; and you are the reprobate."

"I only cut another man's throat, as you

call it, William, in defence of my own life," replied Algernon Grey; "but, of all men, you should be the last to find fault with such a transaction. Methinks I have heard of some six or seven of such affairs upon your hands."

"Ay, but I never begin with fighting," answered Lovet; "when driven to such extremities, I can't help it. I always commence with love and affection; and, if it end with hate and naked rapiers, it is no fault of mine. And so you pinked this Oberntraut! Why, you deserve thanks for that, too. Really it was a public service; if he die, there will be one bubble less upon the stream of the world; and, if he recover, the bleeding and the lesson will do him an immense deal of good. 'Tis a pity it was not in the spring; for that is the time, the doctors say, to let blood."

"Pray, do not jest upon the subject, my good cousin," answered Algernon Grey; "I went unwillingly on a quarrel not of my own seeking; I did what I scarcely judged right to

save my honour ; and I bitterly regret that I was forced to wound a gentleman, who was too skilful a swordsman to be disarmed. Let us talk of other things."

"Pooh !" said Lovet, "he's a coxcomb, and deserved it. If you had not done it, I would have done it for you.—But to talk of other things, as you say. The Elector can certainly mean you no harm by assigning you so pleasant a place for imprisonment. When you have got up your clothes and a few books, you will be as comfortable here as at the inn with a sprained ankle—more so ; for you will want the pain. Then, my dear Algernon, you will be out of all temptation, which is a great thing in your case. Here you can neither drink, nor swear, nor game, nor make love ; in short, you are now physically in the state, to which you voluntarily reduce yourself morally, and are cut off from all the little pleasures of life by that door, instead of a puritanical spirit.—I could myself be very comfortable here but for one thing. I have often thought, as I like to

try every sort of emotion in this world, that I would make myself a voluntary prisoner for a few days, only I could never determine upon the gaol."

"And pray what is the one thing wanting in this sweet place?" asked Algernon Grey; "the one thing I want is liberty; but, I suppose, that is not what you mean?"

"Oh, dear no," cried Lovet, "I mean woman's company; I should require something sadly to play with, to teaze, to irritate, and to amuse myself with, as I would a petted child, and then to soothe her with soft caresses, and look into her liquid eyes, half full of tears, half light. Liberty! Pooh! liberty is nothing. I would sell myself for a sequin to a Turk, if he would but engage to imprison me in his harem. But, on my life! if I were shut up in a prison for any of my small misdemeanours, I would get some fair girl or another to come and entertain me at any price, were it but the gaoler's fat daughter."

Thus went he on for well nigh an hour, with

gay, light, apparently thoughtless talk; but yet it was all calculated to produce a certain impression; and it must not be denied that, in a degree, it did so. He never mentioned the name of Agnes Herbert; he never alluded to her in the most remote manner; he spoke not of his cousin's gallant conduct on the preceding night; he seemed to be ignorant of all that had taken place, except the duel and the arrest. But yet his conversation turned Algernon's thoughts to Agnes, and made him long for her society. His words called up a pleasant dream of how she might cheer the hours of imprisonment, how, under other circumstances, she might make the sad and weary day the sweetest and the brightest of life. Algernon gave himself up to the dream too. As he had no substantial source of pleasure, he fancied he might as well console himself from the stores of imagination; and on Agnes his thoughts rested, fondly, tenderly, even while his cousin remained with him.

Lovet marked well the effect he produced;

the meditative look, the occasional absence of mind, the random answer, and a sigh that once broke forth ; and, when he thought he had succeeded sufficiently, he rose to go.

“ Well, Algernon,” he said, “ what shall I send you up ?—clothes, books, and an instrument of music by the hands of a pretty maid, if I can find one. They tell me, you must not have your man ; but the category did not include the fair sex ; and, unless they are barbarians, they will let you have a *femme-de-chambre*, though they exclude a valet.—Come, come, do not look so grave. I must go and pay my devotions, but first will despatch all that you may require.—Leave it to me, I will make a good selection, never fear ; and your little coxcomb, Frill, shall carry them all hither, and see if they will let him stay to tend upon you. Whatever be their rules and regulations, if they view him justly, he can fall under none of them ; for Heaven only knows what class the little devil belongs to ; I am only certain that he is neither man, woman, nor child.

“Well, send him at all events,” answered Algernon Grey; “it would be convenient if they let him stay. Send a lute, too, if you can find one in the town.”

“A lute!” exclaimed Lovet. “On my life! the man will fall in love at last, if it be but by twanging catgut to his own sweet voice. To think, that two pieces of white board, strung with the entrails of a tame tiger, should give a reasonable creature, full of intellect as he thinks himself, the best consolation in adversity, is a sort of marvel—a lute! Heaven bless the mark!—Well, you shall have a lute, if it be but to make you commit a folly for once in your life and sing soft ditties to a certain spot in the ceiling.—Adieu, cousin, adieu! I will see you again to-morrow.”

“Bring me news of this young baron’s state, if you can get them,” said Algernon Grey.

“Happy for him, I am not his physician,” answered Lovet; and thus saying he left the room.

When he was gone, the prisoner relapsed into thought again; but he had found out—or

at least his cousin's words had suggested—a new source of pleasant meditations. They were dangerous ones, it must be owned—those sweet alluring fancies which lead us along far, much farther than we know of, with steps as light as if the foot rested upon clouds. It was weak, but it was very natural so to give way. For long, long hours there was no occupation for his mind. The choice, if it could be called a choice, was between dark and gloomy broodings over a bitter point in his fate, together with sad anticipations of the future, on the one hand; and, on the other, an unreal dream of happiness, which could hardly, by any possibility, be verified, but which yet presented itself to fancy every moment, when thought was left free to roam, unrestrained by a powerful will. Is it wonderful that he grew weary of the struggle? Is it surprising that more and more he gave way to the bright deceptions of a warm eager heart and quick imagination? Is it to be marvelled at, that in the dull hours of solitude, he turned from the gloomy pic-

tures presented by reason and memory, to gaze upon the glowing pageantry of fancy and hope? Ah, no! And so constituted mentally and corporeally, so situated in the past and in the present, few, very few men on earth would be found to resist more than he resisted, to do otherwise than he did. He yielded his heart to the only comfort it could receive, he yielded his mind to the only thoughts that were bright; and, though his stern resolve to do all that was right maintained its place, yet the traitors of our peace were busily undermining in secret the defences of the castle in which he trusted.

He made Agnes Herbert the companion of his thoughts. He saw her with the mind's eye; the tones of her sweet voice came back to his ear melodiously; the glance of her clear soft eye, with all its tempered brightness, seemed upon him again; the very memory of her grace and beauty brought sunshine with it, as sometimes, when we shut our eyes in the darkness of the night, resplendent scenes come back to sight, all vivid and distinct, as if they

were painted in light upon our closed eyelids. He made a happiness for himself where none other was to be found ; and if it was a weakness, be it remembered he was but man.

Nothing was, indeed, wanting to mere corporeal comfort, except freedom. A well-served table was provided for him ; one of the Elector's servants attended to all that could lighten his captivity ; his clothes, some books, and a lute were brought up in the course of the day ; and a small hand-bell was placed upon a table that he might have the means of summoning attendance when he needed it. His page, indeed, was not admitted ; and no one visited his chamber after the hour of dinner, but once when he rang. His thoughts, however, had by this time chosen their own course. He read little ; he touched not the instrument of music ; but, seated near the window, he gazed out ; and thought while, wandering slowly round to the west, the bright summer sun presented the scene beneath, in the same warm light of evening which had flooded valley and

plain and gilt mountain and castle, when he had seen it from the Altan with Agnes Herbert. Her image mingled with the whole, and the prospect was not the less sweet to his eyes for the associations with which memory enriched the view.

CHAPTER III.

THE sun set; the beams of the departed orb spread up from behind the mountains of the Haardt over the whole wide expanse of the cloudless heaven; and, from the golden verge of the horizon to the glowing crimson of the zenith, a broad sheet of varied colouring stretched unbroken, hue melting into hue, so that the eye could not detect where one tint blended with another. It changed, too, with each passing minute; the golden verge grew red; blue mingled with the crimson overhead; then came a shade of grey; and then looked out a star, like hope to cheer the heart on the departure of some bygone joy. At length

the twilight succeeded to the warm sunset; and stream, and valley, and mountain, and plain grew faint and soft under the prisoner's sight; while his chamber became full of shadows; and many of the bright fancies, which had cheered the day, passed away with the declining light, as if they had been the creatures of the sunshine.

His thoughts were becoming gloomy, when suddenly he heard the key turn in the lock, and then a light knock at the door.

"Come in!" he cried; and the next moment it was opened. But Algernon Grey could scarcely believe his eyes; for in the dim light he saw a woman's form and garments; and heart, more than sight, told him who it was.

Starting up with a quick and joyful movement, he advanced to meet her; but Agnes only entered a few steps, and that with an air of timid hesitation.

"My uncle has sent me to you," she said, giving him her hand, as he came near; "and I am very glad indeed to have any means of

showing my gratitude for all that you have done for me. It is but little that I can do, but still a walk in the quiet evening air will refresh and calm you; and I trust," she added, laying the tips of her small taper fingers on his arm, "that it may tend to soothe the indignation which, I am sure, you must feel at the treatment you have received."

"Indeed, dear lady," answered Algernon Grey, "I feel none."

"Then I feel it for you," answered Agnes, warmly; "I should feel more, indeed, did I not know that it is all weakness, rather than injustice. They fear that fierce old man and his rash son, otherwise this would not have taken place; and for that reason it is that I am obliged to take this unfit hour to give you whatever little liberty I can. But you must promise me," she added, in a timid and imploring tone, "to return when it is time. My uncle told me to exact such an engagement. He could not come himself; for he has been all the evening with the Elector on busi-

ness of importance, planning new defences to the place ; and so he made me your gaoler—sad, yet pleasant task. But you will return, will you not?”

Algernon Grey took her hand again and pressed it in his own. “Whenever you wish it,” he replied.

“Nay, not when I wish it,” answered Agnes ; “that would never be ; for, could my wishes avail aught, you would not be here at all.”

“Well, then, when you ask me,” said the young gentleman.

“No, not so either,” she replied ; “I should never have the heart to ask you. Even in my youngest and most thoughtless days, I could not make a prisoner of a poor bird. How much less, then, of one who has saved my life. I value freedom too much to do so. It must be for you to decide. You shall return when it is right, and you shall be the judge.”

“I will then,” answered Algernon Grey ; “and now let us forth, for I confess I feel the air of imprisonment very heavy ; and the lock

of yonder door, which my fair turnkey has left unguardedly open, is a chain upon my spirits."

"No, not unguardedly," replied Agnes; "but I was quite sure that, for my sake, you would not take a step beyond without permission, when I came to see you. Oh, I know you right well, noble sir. Your conduct to me last night was a whole history; I need no farther insight."

"Indeed," said Algernon Grey, taking his hat from the table as she moved a step or two towards the door; "if you knew my history, it is a strange one; but still I think you read it right, if you judge that in nothing I would abuse your trust."

"I am sure of it," she said, leading the way into the ante-room.

Two guards were seated there on duty; but the lady's presence seemed a passport; and they made no opposition to the prisoner's exit, only rising as he and Agnes passed.

The moment that the top of the stairs was reached, a change seemed to come over the fair girl's demeanour. So long as she

had been in the apartments of the prisoner, a timid sort of hesitation seemed to hang about her, restraining her words and even her movements; but the instant she had passed the door of his prison, her heart and spirit were unchained again.

“Not down there, not down there,” she cried; “you are ignorant of the castle and its manifold turnings and windings. I will lead you through it, and try to cheer you as we go. Here, turn to the left;” and taking her way along a narrow passage, through the tall windows of which streamed a pale and uncertain light, she walked on, till a short staircase of five or six steps led them down to a broad balcony, running along the face of the western part of the building, and looking down into the court. Here she paused for a moment, and Algernon Grey took his place by her side, gazing thoughtfully at the number of servants and officers who were still crossing and recrossing the open space below, like so many ants on their busy labours.

“This castle and the sights that it presents,” said Agnes, after a moment’s meditation, “always make me more or less thoughtful at every moment when one has time for thought. There, on the right, is what they call the Rupert’s building, the oldest part of the castle, it is said; and I know not why, but I cannot look at its ornamented windows, and rich arches, without thinking of all the changes that have taken place in this small spot since it was raised. See, how busily they go along, and how gaily too, as if there had never been any others before, or would come others after.”

“And they are right,” answered Algernon Grey. “Why should men lose the happiness of the moment by thinking of its short duration? A certain portion of life only is given to each human being; and, so to enjoy that portion that our acts shall stain no part with regret, and shall lay up no store of vengeance against us for the future, is, methinks, the wisest policy, as well as the truest religion.”

“And do you think so, too?” exclaimed Agnes,

turning suddenly towards him with a bright smile; "I am glad of it; for sometimes I am inclined, when I have heard a grave discourse of worldly vanities and mortal pleasures, to think myself no better than a butterfly or a bird, because I am so happy in my little day of sunshine. We have men here, who speak so hardly of the brevity of mortal existence, that I cannot but think that they feel dissatisfied so small a portion is allowed them."

"When I hear such men," answered Algernon Grey, "and there are many of them all over the world, they leave a very different impression on my mind from that which they expect to produce. They can have very little confidence in an everlasting future, who dwell so mournfully upon the shortness of the present. To enjoy God's blessings, and, from the heart, to thank Him for all, is to honour Him by the best sacrifice we can offer—at least, so it seems to me; and we may be right sure that, when we can thank him from the heart, we have not enjoyed amiss."

“I think so too,” answered Agnes; “at all events, I know one thing, that though I would strive to bear all misfortunes without repining, yet, when I am happy, I ever feel the most grateful sense of the goodness and mercy of God. But let us come on; and mark that building there, that one with the stony escutcheon on the front; you can scarcely see it, I think, in this dim light; but some day I will tell you a story about it. It is too sad a one for to-night. Let us pass down here; and then, turning to the left again, I will lead you through the chapel.”

As the way was now broader than before, Algernon Grey drew his fair companion's arm through his own, turning as she directed him; and, but for that light touch and that sweet companionship, his walk might have been gloomy enough; for the light faded rapidly as they went on. The long dim passages seemed damp and chilly, even in that summer evening. The moon had not yet risen, but there was sufficient light in the sky to throw deeper

shadows from the columns of masonry upon the faint grey gleam, which still illuminated one side of the halls and corridors in the neighbourhood of the western casements. Agnes, however, was near him; her hand rested gently on his arm; her eyes were turned to his from time to time, as if seeking the expression which gave point to his words. And Algernon Grey was happy; for he felt as if the dreams he had been indulging were realized; and yet he knew at his heart, that the realization was little better than a dream likewise. But he would not give way to sad thoughts; for he remembered that he should have time for plenty of them in his captivity; and the new philosophy, to which he had given way, taught him to enjoy.

“ Shall we see our way across the chapel?” said Agnes, at length, pushing open a small door at the end of a long passage after descending a few steps, and looking into a wide and splendid aisle beyond.

“ Oh yes,” cried Algernon Grey, “ there is plenty of light;” and, taking a step forward

he led her in. The air was very dim ; but yet he could see that, except the architectural decorations, the building was destitute of all ornament.

There is something, however, in the very atmosphere of a place destined for the purposes of prayer, which brings a feeling of awe and solemn meditation upon the heart. Here the petitions of thousands have ascended day after day to the throne of grace. Here the Almighty has promised to be present in the midst of the two or three who seek Him faithfully ; here have been all the struggles, that bare themselves before the Almighty eye ; here the consolation and the hope derived from the pure source of Almighty beneficence. A crowd of grand associations, of mercies sought and benefits received, rush upon the mind and fill it with devotion.

Algernon Grey felt it strongly then, as—with that fair being by his side, whom he had protected, comforted, saved—whom he loved, in spite of reason, in spite of resolution, in spite of

every effort,—he walked slowly up the nave, till he stood with her before the altar.

Then what thoughts were they that came thick upon his mind? What memories, what visions—dark and bright mingling together, black as night and brilliant as the dawn? Whatever were the emotions in Agnes's heart, her hand slowly fell from his arm; and he suffered it to drop. How or why, he knew not; but by an impulse, gentle, yet irresistible, he took it; and there they stood for a moment before that altar, hand in hand. He felt his fingers clasping upon hers more tightly; and, afraid of himself, of his own heart, of his own fate, he drew her arm once more through his, and led her with a deep, heavy sigh, to an open door, through which a faint gleam was streaming,

There was a lamp in the passage beyond; and, by its light, they passed through the northern mass of the building, and mounted the steps to the Altar. The stars were now shining forth in exceeding splendour; each bright spot

in Charles's wane twinkling like a living diamond in the deep blue sky; and the small pole-star glistening high above, fixed and immoveable, like a constant mind, while the others whirled round it in never-ceasing change.

"Ay, this feels like freedom indeed," said Algernon Grey. "I know not how it is, dear lady, but the sensation of liberty is never so strong upon me, as in one of these bright clear nights. During the day, there is a sort of oppressive bondage in the world and the world's thoughts and doings—in the busy multitudes that float about—in the very hum of tongues, and the sight of moving masses of mankind, which seems to cramp and confine the spirit within us. But here, with that profound, unlimited vault above, the wide air all around, and the far-off stars twinkling at immeasurable distances through space, the heart has room to beat; and the soul, upon the wings of thought, wanders unfettered through the infinite creation."

"I love not crowds either," answered Agnes;

“and yet it is pleasant to me that I have my fellow-creatures near—perhaps it is a woman’s feeling, springing from her weakness; but still I would rather not be free, if I were to be all alone on earth. Not that I do not often love solitude and to be afar from the multitude; but still, a wild ramble over a mountain top, or a gallop over a wide open moor, is enough for my small range; and, like the lark, after I have taken my flight and sung my song, I am ever ready to fold my wings and sink to earth again.”

The image pleased her companion; he thought it very like her; and in such conversation passed more than an hour, till the round edge of the yellow moon was seen rising above the fringed forest, and spreading new lustre over the sky.

“Here comes our fair and bountiful companion of last night,” said Algernon Grey; “I will see her rise into the sky before I go; but then, to show how moderate and discreet I am, and to encourage you to give me some more hours

of liberty hereafter, I will tell my fair gaoler that I am ready to return to my prison."

"Strange," said Agnes, looking up in his face with a smile, and leaning a little more heavily upon his arm, "strange that it is I who must ask the prisoner to remain at large for a while; but you know not that you have a visit this night to make, to one, who will thank you on Agnes Herbert's account, for all you did last night."

"Your uncle," asked Algernon Grey.

"No," replied Agnes; "it is to a lady, a kind and noble one. The Electress Louisa, she is anxious to see you, and bade me bring you to her whenever I hear her bell ring. It will not be long first; there she sits in that room, where the lights are shining through the open windows; and when she thinks that the bustle of the day is fully over in the castle, she will give us notice."

"She loves you much, I doubt not," answered Algernon Grey. "'Tis strange to find here one of my own fair countrywomen, domiciled

in a different land, and so linked with a foreign race. There can be no relationship, surely, between you and this Palatine house?"

"The Electress calls me cousin," answered Agnes with a smile, at the half-put question; "but it is a far and not easily traced relationship. Mine is a strange history, my noble deliverer; but, doubtless, every one's is strange, if we knew it all—yours, you say, as well as mine?"

"Most strange," answered Algernon Grey; "and if we meet often, I must tell it to you—Yes, I will," he repeated in a low murmur, as if speaking to himself; but then added, "not now, not now, I cannot tell it now."

"Whatever it is," said Agnes, "I am sure it will show nought but honour and high deeds on your part—I have had proofs of it; and as you, like other men, have mingled in the world, your story will be, doubtless, one of action; while mine is more the history of my race than of myself, for I have done nought and suffered little in this life. Spoiled by kind friends; supported, protected, and left to follow my own

will—often, perhaps, a wayward one—reverses, as yet, I have not known; no strong emotions, either of grief or joy, have visited my breast; and the part of life already gone has lapsed away like a morning dream in pleasant but faint images, scarce worthy the remembrance. You shall tell me your history, if you will; but I cannot promise yet to be as sincere, mine being, as I have said, the history of others rather than my own.”

“I will tell mine, nevertheless,” answered Algernon Grey. “It were better that one, at least, should know it.”

As he spoke, they heard a bell ring; and Agnes exclaimed, “That is the signal of the Electress. Now come with me;” and, leading the way into the castle again, she ascended a long spiral staircase in one of the small towers, and then, proceeding along a well lighted corridor, she passed the top of a broad flight of steps exactly opposite to a large door surmounted by a gilt coronet. A few steps farther on, entered a small room on the right, where, to the

right again, was seen another door apparently leading into the chamber, one entrance of which they had already passed. Here Agnes paused and knocked; and a sweet voice from within instantly answered, "Come in, dear child." The lady then opened the door, and, beckoning Algernon Grey to follow, advanced into the room, which I have already described as the scene of Agnes's interview with the Electress Dowager in the morning.

With a calm and stately step, and his fine thoughtful eyes bent forward on the face of the Electress, Algernon Grey came after his fair conductor at the distance of a few steps. Louisa Juliana gazed at him steadily for an instant, and then bent her head with a dignified air, as Agnes presented him to her.

"Be seated, sir," she said, pointing to a chair near; "and you, my sweet cousin, come hither beside me. Here is your accustomed place."

Algernon Grey took the seat she assigned him; and, leaning his arm with easy grace over

the back, he turned towards the Electress, whilst she proceeded to say, "I have first, sir, to offer you my thanks for your gallant, I might almost call it, heroic conduct last night, in saving the life of my sweet cousin here, who is as dear to me as if she were my child. Accept them, therefore, I beg; and believe me, it is with pain I find my son has thought himself called upon to deprive you of your liberty for a less fortunate event."

"I merit no thanks, your Highness," answered Algernon Grey; "I have but done that which any man of good breeding, not a coward, would do in similar circumstances; nor can I even claim the lady's gratitude; for when I went to give her aid, I really knew not who she was. I will not deny, indeed, that the pleasure of the act was more than doubled, when I found who was the object of it; but surely, a thing which affords such great satisfaction to the giver, deserves no thanks from the receiver. 'Tis done for his own pleasure; and his own pleasure be his reward."

“It would be a harsh doctrine on any other lips but yours,” replied the Electress Dowager, while Agnes shook her head with a smile; “nor can I admit,” continued Louisa Juliana, “that every man of good breeding, not a coward, would do the same. I fear much, my noble young friend, that, pick all the world, you would not find ten such. We have a sad proof of it—you were the only one who went to her rescue.”

“I was more near than any one,” answered Algernon Grey; “so, still, that is no title, lady; however, I am well pleased it has been as it is.”

“The men, who do best service,” answered the Electress, “are always those who require least thanks. I have found it so through life.—But now I have other things to speak of.”

Agnes rose as if she would have withdrawn; but the Electress stopped her, saying, “Stay, stay, my child; you shall be of our counsel; I know that I can trust you.”

Agnes reseated herself in silence, but looked somewhat anxiously to the face of Algernon Grey, with feelings upon which we must pause for a moment. She was a very young diplomatist. She had not learned the art of that craft, as it was practised in those days—I trust less in the present—and she was not aware, that to deceive a friend or benefactor, to lead one who has aided and assisted us, into a dangerous and difficult position, is a stroke of skill, and not a mark of baseness. A sudden doubt came over her, lest the questions which the Electress was about to put—lest even the visit to her apartments might be painful and unpleasant to him who had ventured life to save her; and, though she saw not how she could have escaped from such a task, she was very sorry that she had undertaken it. After one brief glance then, she withdrew her eyes, and remained gazing at some objects on the table, till the voice of the Electress, speaking after a somewhat long pause, roused her, and she listened.

“You have come from England, sir, very

lately, I think," said Louisa Juliana, fixing her eyes upon Algernon Grey.

"Not so, your Highness," replied the young gentleman; "I have been absent from my native land, now, for a long time, frequenting the various courts of Europe, and studying the manners of other nations. On my way back, I received letters at Genoa, which made me resolve to remain some time longer out of England; but I have not seen aught of it for more than five years."

"Methinks you are very young," said the Electress, "to be such a traveller. Doubtless you have forgotten all about the court of England."

"Oh, no," replied Algernon Grey; "I may be older than I seem; but certainly was not young enough when I departed, to forget aught that was worth remembering."

"'Tis a strange court," continued Louisa Juliana; "and yet, to say truth, all courts are strange. Do you know the king?"

The question was somewhat abrupt; but the

young Englishman replied immediately : " Oh, yes, I know him well, without being one of the minions or the favourites of the court."

" And, doubtless, have been trusted by him?" rejoined the Electress, in a sort of catechising tone—" he is a wise and witty monarch."

" I know not any mark of trust that he has ever given me," replied Algernon Grey ; " and his courtiers give him right good cause to be witty as well as to be vain. I have always remarked, that where there is much of this lip-service there is little real loyalty, and that downfalls are preceded by the most servile adulation of power. I trust it may not be so in our day."

" You doubt it," replied the Electress ; " and I think it may be so ; for I always doubt it, too. This court is full of flatterers as well as yours. They would persuade my son that he is a god, as they persuade your monarch that he is a Solomon. Fortunately, fate holds out no offer to King James of another crown ; and even if it

did, he would never stretch forth a hand to reach it. Here we are in a different position. The diadem of Bohemia, which beyond all doubt will be offered to the Elector in a few days, will find, I fear, a more ambitious candidate, and one who may not calculate so well the means to the end."

Algernon Grey was silent; for he felt that the subject was a difficult one to speak upon; but, after waiting for a few moments, the Electress added: "What say you, is it not so?"

"Really, your Highness, I cannot answer," replied her visitor; "I have never spoken with the Elector on the subject—I have only seen him once."

Louisa Juliana gazed at him steadfastly, and then said, with a smile: "Come, come, Master Grey, let us be candid with each other. Thus stands the case. The Elector is wealthy, powerful in his own dominions, doubtless, a wise and warlike Prince, but at the same time to grasp and hold a crown requires a ruthlessness which he does not possess. What is the Palatinate

pitted against the empire? What can give even the seeming of success to such a struggle, except potent and immediate foreign aid.— Will your king give it, Master Grey?”

“Really, your Highness, I cannot tell,” answered Algernon, a good deal surprised at the lady’s tone.

“Methinks not,” continued Louisa Juliana. “He is a wise, but most pacific king; wasting in subtleties those powers of mind, and in pageantry and revelling those vast material resources, which are most needful to keep a turbulent and energetic people under even wholesome rule, which, wisely employed, would be successful, but which, thus foolishly squandered, will leave a debt that nought but the best blood in the land can wipe out.— Forgive me, Master Grey, that I thus speak of your sovereign; but see, what does he do now in my son’s case? What energy, what activity does he display in behalf of his own child?”

“But small, I fear, madam,” answered Al-

gernon Grey ; “but, perhaps, if he see danger menace, he may do more.—However, I know so little of the court of England, that I have no right to form a judgment.”

Louisa Juliana shook her head : “You are a diplomatist,” she said ; “and for so young a one, a wise one ; for I have heard that the chief skill of that intricate art consists in three negatives : ‘Not to know more than enough ; not to say more than enough ; and not to see more than enough.’”

“Indeed, your Highness does me wrong,” replied the young Englishman ; “I belong to no such base craft ; for I cannot hold the task of deceiving to be aught than dishonourable, the task of concealing aught but pitiful. I am no diplomatist, I can assure you ; not even of that better kind, who, like the great Duke of Sully, make it their boast to frustrate dishonest craft by wise honesty.”

“Then you are greatly mistaken here,” rejoined the Electress Dowager ; “for every one thinks you have been sent over by King James

to see how the land lies, and give advice or promise of assistance accordingly."

Algernon Grey laughed: "Your Highness will pardon me," he said; "but I beseech you to believe me, when I tell you, that, a mere boy when I quitted the court of England, I am recollected there by friends and enemies, kings and statesmen, but as a mere boy still."

"Hush!" cried the Electress, raising her hand; "some one knocks. See who it is, my Agnes. I thought we should be free from interruption."

Agnes Herbert ran lightly to the great doors, opened them partly, and, after speaking a few words to some one without, closed them and returned, saying in a low voice; "The Elector, madam, with the counsellor Camerarius, is coming up, and has sent forward a page to say he wishes to confer with you."

"He must not be found here," cried the Electress, looking at Algernon Grey; "quick, take him into my dressing-room; then, when you hear that they are all arrived, lead him

down by the great staircase and away out upon the Altan.—Quick, Agnes, quick!—Adieu, Master Grey; we will talk farther another night.”

With a sign to him whom we now may well call her lover, Agnes ran to the small door to the left of the Electress, exactly opposite to that by which they had entered, and threw it open. All was dark beyond; but Algernon Grey, though he was not fond of such secrecy, followed the fair girl with an inclination to the Electress Dowager; and, drawing the door gently to behind them, Alice took his hand, saying:—“I will guide you; but we must open this other door a little, to know when they pass;” and, advancing a step or two, she opened a chink of the door, which seemed to lead out upon the great corridor at the top of the stairs.

In a few moments, the sound of footsteps reached them, and a voice speaking, which Algernon Grey recollected well as that of the Elector. They heard the great doors thrown open and

closed again ; and then the young Englishman whispered : — “ We can go now, I think.”

“ Hush ! ” replied Agnes ; “ there is some one going down the steps.” The next instant a round, fat, but somewhat cracked voice was heard to exclaim : — “ So you have caged the birds, Joachim.—Now let us wait here and watch till they take flight again ; and I will instruct thee in the sciences of courts.”

“ More likely to instruct one in the science of pottle pots and great tuns,” answered a younger voice.

“ It is the fool and the page,” whispered Agnes, “ waiting on the landing five or six steps down. How shall we get out ? ”

“ Cannot we go by the staircase which led us hither ? ” rejoined Algernon Grey.

“ We must cross the top of the great staircase,” answered Agnes ; “ and they can see up to the very door. We had better wait where we are.—Hark ! they are speaking in the other room ; we must keep as still as death.”

Algernon Grey made no reply, but remained standing close beside her ; and in the silence they preserved, a great part of the double conversation that went on, in the chamber of the Electress Dowager, and on the landing of the stairs was distinctly audible to the ears of the young pair. A part, indeed, was lost, or conveyed very little meaning ; but what was heard, for some time made a strange medley of ceremonious courtesy and broad vulgarity, questions of policy and absurd jest. Sometimes this extraordinary cross reading turned epigrammatically, sometimes gave the most curious counter-sense ; and it was difficult to ascertain at all times whence the voices proceeded, so as to know whether the reply was addressed to the sentence just heard before, or to one that preceded and had been lost.

“I know right well, counsellor Camerarius, what are your opinions, and on what they are founded,” were the first words audible. But immediately a merry but coarse voice said :—
“Eleven bottles of sack a day, a gold chain and

a fool's cap are no things to be lightly respected, Master Joachim."

"But hear me, your Highness," said another voice, "you, I know, are always amenable to reason, and you must not prejudge me, nor suppose that I am biassed by ordinary motives."

"If what a fool thinks were to guide men of reason," said another tongue; "a fool's cap and bells would be as good as the crown of Bohemia."

"We must discuss this question, dearest mother, without passion or prejudice," was the next sentence; "great interests are at stake, your son's, the Protestant religion, the liberty of Germany,—"

"The great tun of Heidelberg brimful of wine," exclaimed the juicy tongue of the jester, "would not drown the gabbling of a page; he would still shout from the bottom of the vat and make empty bubbles on the top, as full of noise as a petard.—"

"Nothing more is wanting to shatter the

whole constitution of this empire," Camerarius was heard to say, "than disunion amongst the Protestant princes, the fall of that kingdom which has first raised the voice against tyranny, oppression, and superstition, and the rejection of a proffered crown by the only sovereign prince who is qualified to guide the march of events by power, talent, and influence."

"Give me reason and a good supper," said the page.

"But have you an offer thereof?" asked the Electress.

"If I had the rule, you should have none," said the jester, "but a good whipping and a book to read."

"The sceptre of Bohemia."

"A fig for your bauble."

"A coxcomb against a page's feather."

"At the feet of your Highness's son, with all the advantages, which—"

"The König's-stool and the Heiligberg upon your head for a mad ape; you have untrussed my jerkin and let my fat out."

“No motives of personal ambition, no hope or expectation of renown, nay, not even the voice of an oppressed people would induce me, dearest mother.”

“Though the gods and goddesses were to come down upon earth to wash themselves in the fountains of the gardens, you would still be an ass and drink deep to the increase of your carcass, and the perdition of your soul.”

“Notwithstanding which, the voice of the people of Bohemia is not to go for nothing; and, when added to that, is the maintenance of the Protestant religion in merely its just rights and liberties—”

“A whoreson varlet with legs like a blacksmith’s tongs; feet like the ace of diamonds, and shoulders vastly too intimate with his ears.”

“Those who could advise the prince to give a decided refusal to such an appeal—”

But here Algernon Grey called off the attention of his fair companion from the curious conversation which they overheard, by gently touching her hand and saying:—“Methinks,

we must listen to this no longer, sweet lady."

"How can we avoid it?" rejoined Agnes in a whisper. "To close either of the doors now, would be worse than to risk and go boldly down the stairs."

"Then let us go boldly," answered Algernon Grey. "It were better to risk anything personally, methinks, than to overhear what is evidently not intended for our ears."

"You are right," said Agnes, "you are right—I only feared—but no matter for personal fears; they shall not stop me from doing what I ought. Let us come, then;" and advancing a step, she opened the door upon the corridor and went out.

There was a large lamp suspended opposite to the door of the Electress Dowager, casting a full light upon the stairs. In the corner of the landing, leaning with one leg cast over the other, was a fat, short, red-faced man, dressed in the motley garb of the fools of those days; while, opposite to him, lolling against the

balustrade, was a lad of some sixteen or seventeen years of age, habited in the splendid costume of the Electoral pages. Advancing straight towards them, and descending the stairs with a calm countenance, Algernon Grey passed on side by side with Agnes Herbert. The page moved and drew himself up, doffing his bonnet as they went by; but the jester, with the usual license of his calling, remained in his corner unmoved, shutting one eye and fixing the other keen grey orb upon the lady with an inquisitive stare. The moment she and her companion had passed, however, he stuck his tongue into his cheek and winked knowingly to the page, who replied merely by a low laugh.

“What will come of it, Master Joachim?” asked the jester, after a pause.

“Nay, I know not,” replied the youth; “love and marriage, I suppose.”

“Nay, love won’t come,” said the jester; “for he is there already; and marriage may come, or may not, as the gods will have it;”

but, if I were pretty Mrs. Agnes Herbert, I would take that long fellow to the buttery, and give him a toast and two or three bottles of Burgundy wine. She is afraid of doing so, for fear of being found out; but, methinks, it would be the seal of matrimony, which Heaven send her speedily; for the walking about in the passages of this old castle is somewhat like to chill the little god, Cupid's brother, who is known to be rather aguish."

In the mean while Agnes and Algernon Grey walked on and passed through the lower part of the castle, and upon the Altan again. There she paused with a momentary hesitation; for she felt how sweet a thing liberty must be to her companion, and she could not find it in her heart to say that it was time to return to his prison. Did any personal feelings mingle with her reluctance? Was she unwilling to part with him so soon? Who ever felt a joy that was not grieved to lose it? and Agnes Herbert had been very happy by the side of Algernon Grey.

He saved her the pain of speaking, however, by divining her thoughts ere they were told.

“Methinks, dearest lady,” he said, “that it must be time for me to return, and for you to go to other occupations, though your kind heart will not tell me so. Let us on towards my tower, however. My heartfelt thanks are due for the alleviation you have given me, and I would not for the world mingle one pain with the pleasure you must feel in such an act.”

“My only pain,” replied Agnes, walking on beside him, “is, that you must return at all. The Electress Dowager, I think, may call for me again, or I would say, stay longer.”

They were not long ere they reached the foot of the stairs leading up to the place of Algernon’s imprisonment—it seemed to him, indeed, marvellously short—and there he stopped to bid her farewell for the night. True, he might have done so as well above; but there the guards tenanted the antechamber; and feelings which he would not own to himself

made him unwilling to have witnesses to his parting with her.

“Farewell, dear lady,” he said, pressing her hand in his; “if you could tell the relief and pleasure you have afforded the poor prisoner, your heart would, I am sure, rejoice.—Nay, I feel that it does, though you cannot know from experience how tedious the hours of captivity are. Thanks—a thousand thanks—for the solace of the free air, rendered trebly bright by your sweet company.”

“You have no thanks to give,” she answered, leaving her hand in his; “do I not owe you everything? and, surely, a few hours from the life you have saved is but a poor offering for a grateful heart to make. To-morrow night, at the same hour, I know I may promise to come again, and perhaps my uncle will come with me. Till then, I must bid you adieu. Sleep well; and pleasant dreams be yours.”

He still held her hand for a moment—he still gazed upon that fair and beaming face by the pale light of the lamp that hung upon

the staircase, and sensations he could hardly master rose in his bosom. They frightened him, and, breaking suddenly the spell that held him, he turned and mounted to the chamber, where sat the men on guard. There, came another adieu, colder in seeming but not less warm in truth; and, entering, he himself closed the door. He heard her hand laid upon the key; but it did not turn, and the next instant her sweet voice reached his ear, somewhat trembling in tone, as she said to one of the guards—"Here, come and lock it—I cannot."

"Why, it goes as easy as a wheel," answered the man, advancing with a heavy foot; and the next moment the door was locked.

Agnes trod her way back with a slow and thoughtful step towards the corridor of the apartments of the Electress Dowager; but at the foot of the stairs she met her uncle Herbert, and the keen eye of affection soon discovered that, from some cause, he was agitated, though he endeavoured to maintain his usual equable mien.

"What is the matter?" she said, clinging to his arm; "you are disturbed—I see it in your eyes."

"'Tis nothing, my Agnes," he said, "nothing. So you have given your prisoner his little holiday. How did he comport himself?"

"He enjoyed it much," answered Agnes; "in his calm and serious manner, he showed as much pleasure as I hoped he would feel."

"Ay, but to you, my child," asked Herbert, "was there any difference this night?"

"Exactly the same as ever," replied the beautiful girl, with a gay smile; "banish all fears and doubts. Indeed, indeed, you may. I thought they were gone for ever; for I know that such things linger not in your heart; and when once you trust, you trust implicitly. You may trust here—on him—on me; for not one word has ever passed our lips that the whole world might not listen to."

"'Tis well," said her uncle, thoughtfully, "'t is well—I do trust."

"Nay, but all is not well, I am sure,"

rejoined Agnes; "something has troubled you."

"Nothing but the words of a fool," answered Herbert; "and I am a fool for being troubled by them. Yet something must be done to set this matter right. Listen, dear one; I met, just now, that mischievous idiot, the Elector's droll.—How is it that men of common sense can find delight in the malicious drivelling of a lackwitted knave like that? He spoke with mockery of my Agnes—said he had seen her taking love's walk, which is a crooked one, forth from the bedchamber next the Dowager Electress' hall, down to the pleasure gardens, and bade me look well to my pretty bird, as he called you. What more he said, I need not repeat. One cannot strike an idiot, or I had felled him."

Agnes laughed gaily. "Nay, nay," she said; "he has but proved himself more fool than ever."

"Laugh not, Agnes, in your young innocence," answered Herbert; "no woman's name

must be lightly spotted. You know not that the slightest foul mark upon a pure reputation remains for ever, breeding doubts and suspicions impossible to be removed. I'll tell you what, my child, I must have done ;—for it shall never be said that with my will you ever did aught you were ashamed to acknowledge. I know that the Princess bade you bring him to her, though why you passed through that room I cannot divine ; but now you shall go to the Electress Dowager, and tell her the history ; you shall petition for leave to speak the exact truth of how and why you were seen coming from that room with the prisoner. You will obtain it, I doubt not ; but if she should refuse, I must speak to her myself ; for this may rest as a stain upon you, my child ; and it must not be. So well do I know you, Agnes, that I say boldly and fearlessly, do anything you will, provided it be that which you can explain to the whole world, when it becomes necessary. But, at the same time, I warn you, dear one, never do aught that you cannot explain ; for

diplomacy is not a lady's trade; and, if it be dangerous in the hands of a man, it is fatal in those of a woman."

"I will go to the Electress, at once," answered Agnes; "for although, so far as I am personally concerned, I would scoff at all idle rumours, yet were they to give you pain, it would be no matter to be scoffed at."

"Go, Agnes, go," rejoined Herbert. "It is better, both for you and for me; when you have once the power of explaining all, I care not for aught else. Idle rumours affect me not, Agnes; and fools may talk and babble as they please; but doubtful circumstances, unaccounted for, must not affect you, my child."

"I go, then," replied Agnes; and, mounting the stairs, she hurried to the apartments of the Electress Dowager.

CHAPTER IV.

THERE was a lamp lighted in the chamber to which Algernon Grey returned. He found the room neatly ordered, as if care and attention had been bestowed upon it ; and, in a few minutes after his return, a servant entered, bearing materials for a meal such as prisoners seldom taste. The man set it down and retired in silence ; but Algernon Grey left the supper untouched. For nearly a quarter of an hour he strode up and down the room in deep thought ; and then, breaking off suddenly, he said, "I will go to bed and sleep. What need of troubling my mind with things that may never occur ? Am I to cast away every enjoy-

ment of this mortal life, for fear of their remote consequences? No, I will guard my heart firmly; I will rule my conduct strictly; but I will not debar myself of my sole solace, for fear it should become too sweet. I will go and sleep, and these gloomy visions will take their flight before the morning."

Accordingly, proceeding into the other room, he undressed and went to bed. Neither did sleep refuse to visit his eyelids; for there are few things more wearing and wearisome than the dull lapse of solitary hours to an active and energetic mind; but his slumber was not calm; it was not of that soft and balmy kind which visits the pillow of careless childhood; nor was it chequered with those light gay dreams which hover over the bed of hopeful youth. Visions he had many; but they were all more or less dark, all more or less troubled; and the same forms and features were in each. Two female figures were ever present, and one was Agnes Herbert. But, as I have already touched this theme, I will not

pause here to enter into the details of all that imagination and memory suggested to the sleeping brain. Suffice it, that he slept without repose ; and that agitated feelings, running masterless in unreasoning slumber, wore both body and mind, even during the hours of rest.

He woke on the following morning languid and unrefreshed ; and, if he had lain down somewhat gloomy in his thoughts, the next morning found him sadder and less tranquil still.

The heavy hours rolled slowly on, and nothing occurred throughout the morning to break the dull monotony of his imprisonment. The servant brought in the meals, arranged the rooms, and showed towards him every sort of civility and attention. But still it was not there that Algernon Grey could find companionship, and but few words passed, the young gentleman still speaking first, and receiving but brief and insignificant answers in return. The sight even of a human face, it is true, was pleasant to him ; but yet it seemed each time that the man came and went as if

his momentary presence and quick departure but added to his heaviness of heart.

He longed for somebody with whom he could converse—any one, it mattered not whom; and he looked eagerly for his cousin's promised visit; but that day William Lovet came not. It is true his conversation had a great deal in it more irritating than pleasant to the ears of Algernon Grey; but yet there was something in companionship, something in old associations and mutual habits of thought which he fancied would be a relief; and he felt disappointment as the moments flew, and he saw him not.

Perhaps there might be a desire to fly from other ideas—to rid his mind of reflection upon matters on which he did not wish it to rest; but as evening came on, and with it that change of light which, without diminishing the lustre of day, softens and saddens it, thought would have way; and Agnes Herbert was again the theme, resolution contending with affection, and an honourable spirit with a warm

and ardent heart. He asked himself, "What am I feeling? What am I doing?" And to both—though seemingly very simple questions—he found it difficult to reply. The difficulty existed in the subtlety of man's heart; for skilful, indeed, must he be, and well experienced in the ways of that dark and intricate labyrinth, who can find the path to the arcanum at once. And yet he remembered his sensations towards Agnes when he had stood with her in the chamber adjoining that of the Electress; when her hand touched his; when, bending down his head to hear her whispered words, he felt her warm fragrant breath fan his cheek like that of the spring wind. Could he not have thrown his arms around her, and clasped her to his beating breast, and pressed warm kisses on those sweet lips, and asked her to be his—his for ever? Could he not at that moment have poured forth, as from a gushing fountain, the full tide of first and passionate love, bearing all before it on its fierce and eager course? He felt that he could; he felt

that he had escaped a great peril ; and he asked himself: " Should he risk the same again ? Should he madly run into the same strong and terrible temptation ? If he did, was it not improbable that any circumstances would arise anew to strengthen and support him ; that any means of escape, that any happy accident would present itself to enable or lead him to fly from the immediate danger ? "

" It is madness to put it to the hazard," he thought. " No, I will not go !—I will frame some excuse, not to pain her kind and gentle heart ; and, even if I do show her want of courtesy, it is better than to show a want of honour."

He paused and pondered long. He thought of what he should do, and what he should say ; he considered how he might best act, so as to avoid the perilous society, without wounding one whose sole wish was to give him pleasure. Vain thought ! Idle considerations ! as they always are with man. We raise an imaginary scaffold, and then build upon it. Comes firm

reality and knocks it down beneath our feet; the whole structure falls; and happy is it if our best hopes and brightest happiness are not crushed in the ruins. The last two hours—they were hours of meditation—had passed rapidly—far more so than he had imagined. He had not heard the sound of the clock; he had not marked the rapid decline of the sun and the steady advance of night. He saw, indeed, or rather he felt, that darkness spread through the chamber in which he sat; but he had rung for no lights, and he changed not his position. He remained fixed with his eyes bent upon the ground, his arm resting on the back of the chair, and the left hand playing with his empty swordbelt, not raising a look even towards the window, where the glowing heaven shone in, radiant with the last smile of day.

In about a quarter of an hour after the key was turned in the lock, and some one knocked lightly at the door. He knew that it was Agnes's hand: he felt sure of it before he saw

her; and, advancing quickly, he gave her admission, saying in a mingled tone of joy and sadness: "Welcome, welcome, dear lady, you are punctual to your hour."

"Not quite," answered Agnes; "but I was detained a little. Your time of freedom shall not be abridged, however; for we can stay out the longer—Now, will you come?"

There was a struggle in Algernon Grey's heart; his lips would scarcely utter the words he had resolved on; and, perhaps, had he not seen, as they stood together at the door, that the antechamber was for the moment vacant, the restraint which the presence of others always more or less imposes would at once have turned the balance against resolution. As it was, however, after a pause he replied: "Nay, dear lady, you will think me churlish and morose, I fear, when I say, it is better for me not to go, and, with deep gratitude and heart-felt thanks, decline your kindness."

"But why?" exclaimed Agnes, gazing on

him with surprise ; “ surely, I should think it would be a relief.”

“ And so it is,” he answered, “ a sweet and joyful one ; but that momentary relief, dear lady, makes me but feel the bitterness of imprisonment more painfully when it is over. Believe me, it is better I should stay.”

His words, as so frequently happens with words which do not fully express all the speaker thinks, had quite the contrary effect to that which he intended. They made Agnes Herbert but the more eager to comfort and to soothe him, to lighten his hours of solitude, to banish the dark thoughts that seemed to oppress him ; and she answered : “ Nay, come ! Do not give way to such gloomy fancies. I will take no denial. You surely cannot refuse a lady, when she asks your company in a walk through the free air. I fear you hold my gratitude as little worth ; but this is the only means I have of showing it. I would willingly come and sit with you and cheer you through the day, if my uncle could come, too ; but the Elector has

besought him to hurry forward the new defences of the castle and the town; and every instant of his time is employed. Besides, you must come to-night; for I have got news for you of various kinds; and I cannot stay here to tell them."

Algernon Grey smiled faintly; but his resolution gave way; and taking Agnes's hand, he pressed his lips upon it, answering: "You are very kind—too kind; but I must not make you think me ungrateful for such kindness; therefore I come." At the same moment the guard re-entered the antechamber, and Algernon Grey followed the lady through it, and descended the stairs with her.

Grown somewhat bolder by custom, the lady led him at once across the great court, and thence into the gardens of the castle. "Now," she said, with a gay laugh, "if you had the will to be refractory, who could stop you from breaking prison? Not this weak hand, I fear."

"But these gardens are all walled round," answered Algernon Grey, "and hemmed in

with the defences and outworks. Methinks it would be no easy task to make one's escape hence."

"As easy as to sail upon a lake with a light wind and a summer sky," answered Agnes gaily. "The ground is all pierced over which we tread, with subterranean passages leading hither and thither, some to the mountain, some down into the town.—Did you not see those two obelisks just now with two half-open doors by the side? Well, they lead straight into the city; and the first night, when I was wandering with you through these gardens, you must have remarked a man appear so suddenly that he startled me. He was some one belonging to the castle, who had come up by the vaults.—But I must not tell you all these secrets, lest, finding so many doors of his cage open, the captive bird should take wing and fly away."

She spoke gaily and lightly; and Algernon Grey replied, "No fear, no fear, dear lady; you have a stronger hold upon the poor bird than wires or bars—the chain of honour. No

gentleman could so misuse your trust. But you seem yourself to be well acquainted with all these secret ways; though, doubtless, they are not much trod by lady's feet."

"Oh, I have them all in my little head," she answered, "as if upon a map. My uncle has shown them to me all; for he has a strange sort of superstition, that some time or another the knowledge may be needful to me. I know not what he fears or fancies, but so it is; for gloomy thoughts frequently possess him, and I do not wonder at it. But now I will tell you my news, and first a silly story about myself; for women, they say, always like to talk about themselves before all things. Do you know our adventure last night alarmed my uncle for his poor child's reputation?"

"How so?" exclaimed Algernon, with a start and feeling of more apprehension than the lady's words might seem likely to produce; "what adventure, sweet lady?"

"Oh, our adventure in escaping from the apartments of the Electress Dowager," Agnes

replied. "Do you not remember passing the fool upon the stairs, and the page? Well, they saw us come forth from the room on the left; and that fool is as malicious and insolent as he is drunken. He met my uncle a few minutes after; he thought fit to jest with my poor name. But I only laughed when I was told; for, methinks, when the breast is clear and the heart quiet, one may well treat a fool's ribaldry with scorn. But my uncle took it up more seriously, and insisted I should ask permission of the Princess to tell the whole, in case of need. I related to her all that had happened to us, how we had overheard in the neighbouring chamber part of her conversation with her son, and how we had determined to confront the fool and the page upon the stairs rather than listen to more. She said we had done well, and gave the permission I asked for."

"Did it end there?" asked Algernon Grey; "or has this knave been busy spreading his scandal?"

"Oh, yes," answered Agnes, "he has; and

perhaps it is lucky I obtained leave to speak; for early this morning the Elector sent for me, and, with a grave brow, told me I had been seen the night before leading the English prisoner down from his mother's lodging. I answered simply enough, 'I know I was, your Highness. The fool and the page both saw me.' He then asked me what it meant; and I replied, that I had her Highness's permission to tell him, if he asked, that it was by her commands that I had brought you thither and led you away again."

"What more, what more?" said Algernon Grey, as the lady paused.

"Why, this intelligence seemed to throw him into a fit of musing," continued Agnes; and, at length, he said, 'So, she has discovered him, too, and his errand;' and then he asked me if I knew who you were; I answered, 'I had been told your name was Algernon Grey;' and thereupon he laughed and shook his head; but inquired no further, saying, 'If it were by his mother's orders, it was well.' Nevertheless, I

could see that he thinks you some great man, and that you come here upon some secret mission of deep moment. So, henceforth, I shall call you 'my lord,' and be very ceremonious."

"Nay, nay, not so," answered Algernon Grey, thrown off his guard; "give me none of such formal titles, sweet lady; from your lips they would sound very harsh to me."

"Then call me not 'lady' any more," she answered; "none but the servants here do that. I am the child of the castle, and to those who know and love me, I am only Agnes."

Algernon Grey felt his heart beat fast; but he had a habit of flying away from such emotions; and after a single moment's pause, he said, "I must clear your mind of one impression. The Elector is quite wrong; and so, I fancy, is the Electress Dowager. Because, for an idle whim, I and my cousin have pledged ourselves to each other to go through Europe for a year under false names, they fancy here, I find, that we have

some concealed object, and that I, who never meddled yet with the intrigues of courts, am charged with some secret mission. I give you my honour—and by this time, I hope, you know it is to be trusted—that I have no such task to perform; that I have no state secrets of any kind; in short, that I am but a simple English gentleman, travelling hither and thither to while a certain portion of dull time—”

“Which you heartily wish were over,” answered Agnes gaily.

“Not so, upon my life,” answered Algernon; “although I deeply love my country, yet there are matters therein sooner or later to be brought to issue, which make me long to go on wandering thus, till life and the journey find their close together, and never more to set my foot on British shores. But here come sad thoughts again, and I will not indulge them. You hinted that there was more to be told me. I hope the rest of the tidings is less bitter; for it is painful for me that your great kindness,

Agnes, should have brought discomfort upon you or your uncle."

"Oh, to me it is none, and with him it is past; but the rest of my news will, I am sure, be pleasant to you. You have heard of an unfortunate duel that was fought," she said, looking up in his face with a smile which the twilight did not conceal, "between an English gentleman and the Baron of Oberntraut. You have been sorry for the young baron, I am sure, and will be glad to hear that to-day he is much better. His wounds, indeed, seem not to be mortal, as was at first thought; and these terrible faintings, from several of which they fancied he would never revive, proceeded solely from great loss of blood. I hear he was up this afternoon and seated in a chair."

"This is good news, indeed," answered Algeron Grey. "Believe me I did not seek to wound him, and perilled my own safety to avoid it; till, at length, in the half-light—for it was then growing dark—I was obliged to return

his attack, seeking to touch him but slightly. He slipped, however, and was thus more sharply hurt. You too are pleased, if I judge rightly," he added, gazing down upon her with an inquiring look; "for methinks that a part of the young baron's wrath against myself is a sort of retribution for one pleasant evening that I enjoyed too much with you in these same gardens."

"I trust not," said Agnes, eagerly; "I trust not. He should have known better. He is a noble, brave, and upright man, generous, and kind in many things; but still—" and there she paused, as if unwilling to speak farther.

Two or three minutes of silence had passed, and the hearts of Algernon Grey and Agnes Herbert were perhaps both busy with feelings somewhat similar. At length a wild strain of music rose up from the town below, and they paused on the edge of the great terrace to listen to it.

"A party of young students singing," said the lady. "Do you love music?"

"I must not say better than aught on earth," replied Algernon Grey; "but yet if I were to ask for any sort of consolation in hours of grief and heaviness, I would choose some sweet voice to sing my cares away. I made my cousin send me up an instrument; but I know not how it is I have not had the heart to use it."

"Oh, I will sing for you some time or another," answered Agnes; "I learned from a famous Italian musician who was here, and who said I was no bad scholar."

"It would be, indeed, a great delight," said Algernon; "but I fear I must not hope for it as a solace of my imprisonment, if your uncle is so busily occupied."

Agnes looked down thoughtfully for a moment and then laughed: "I do not know," she replied; "I do not know; we shall see. I trust your imprisonment will not be long; and you told me once you were going away very soon. I must lose no opportunity of showing my deep

thankfulness for what you have done for me. It is little, indeed, that I can offer. Some men have mines of gold and precious stones, and some but a garden of poor flowers; but were I a prince, I would not value less the tribute of the poor man's blossoms, if given with a willing heart, than that of the great vassal's ore. I do hope that you will feel the same, and accept all I can do, though it be but small, as a testimony of what I would do had I greater means."

We need not pursue their conversation farther: for nearly an hour more it went on in the same strain; and if the resolutions of Algernon Grey faltered for a moment now and then,—if a tenderer word would fall from his lips,—yet still, considering the feelings that were at his heart, he exercised great power over himself. I know not whether it were better or worse for Agnes, that he did so; for certainly the calmness of his manner and the careful tone of his language aided her in deceiving herself as to that which was in her

own breast. She laughed to scorn the thought of love between them. She was grateful, deeply grateful; and if there was aught more in her bosom, she fancied it was but a feeling of compassion for one whom she thought wronged by unjust imprisonment. She could hear him talk as calmly of his departure, she said to herself, as she could listen to a sermon or a lecture. She could speak of it herself without one emotion. Was this like love? Oh, no. She had a deep friendship for him; well she might have; but that, and gratitude, and compassion, were all. Agnes knew not what she would have felt had she been called upon to part with him at that moment. As it was, she went on gaily, like a child treading the verge of a precipice and gathering flowers upon the edge of destruction. And when the time of his short liberty was at an end, she was sorry for it; for it had been a sweet and pleasant time to her. They parted at the door of his chamber, each with a sigh; and Algernon Grey paced up and down his solitary room, and, as the moon rose

solemnly over the hills, opened his window and gazed forth as if his thoughts would be more free with the wide expanse of heaven and earth before him. The moment after, he heard the sound of an instrument of music; and turning quickly round to the right he saw the light streaming forth from an open casement, which, as far as he could calculate, was near those of the Electress Dowager. He could not see into the room; but the sweet sounds issued forth upon the night air, as a skilful hand swept the strings; and a moment after a voice, the sweet, clear, rounded tones of which he knew right well, poured out a flood of melody, rising and falling on the ear like the notes of a nightingale in the spring eventide. The music was not exactly gay; but yet, every now and then, a cheerful tone enlivened the graver strains; and partly from memory—for he had heard the song before—partly from the exceeding clearness with which every word was pronounced, he distinguished each verse as it was sung.

SONG.

The moon is on high, but she's hid by a cloud,
The prospect looks gloomy and drear,
And still through the night may she weep 'neath the
shroud ;
But daylight is coming, and near.

The heart is bowed down 'neath the cares of the hour,
And the eye may be dimmed by a tear ;
But the heart shall rise up in the morn like a flower ;
A brighter day's coming, and near.

We have trusted and hoped, been oppress'd, and have
grieved ;
But joy will return, never fear :
There's a trust and a hope that is never deceived ;
A brighter day's coming, and near.

Each life has its joy, and each life has its pain ;
But the tempest still leaves the sky clear ;
And for honour and truth, which are never in vain,
A brighter day's coming, and near.

CHAPTER V.

ANOTHER night passed of agitating thought, with but little sleep and many troublous dreams; and for more than one long hour Algernon Grey remained in deep and intense thought, pondering over the present and the future. I know not how or why—for there are many mysteries in man's nature, which the skill of philosophy, as yet, has not been able to unravel;—but certain it is, that at one particular portion of the night, unless sleep deaden the reflective powers and still the imagination, or active exertion occupies the thoughts with tangible things, dark and gloomy images come crowding upon the mind and seem to triumph

over the powers of reason, with a supernatural influence, like that which has been attributed to spectres from the grave. All that is sad and horrible in man's general fate, all that is grievous or perilous or worthy of regret in the history of the past, in the aspect of the present, and in the prospect of the future, marches by in long and black procession; and the oppressed heart is fain to exclaim at this sight of human ills, "What! will the line last to the crack of doom?"

The couch of Algernon Grey was not without such apparitions; and—alas! that I should say it—the thought of her who had just quitted him in all her beauty, in all her sweetness, in all her grace, but rendered the wild phantoms of fancy more terrible. He felt, he could not deny, in that hour of the opening of the heart's secrets to itself, that he loved her, eagerly, ardently, with that first passionate love of enthusiastic youth; that to win her he would willingly have sacrificed rank, name, station, aught on earth but his

own sense of right. But still, at the same time, came a voice from his own breast, like that of fate, repeating: "She cannot be thine! She cannot be thine!"

"What should he do?" he asked himself; "how should he act?" He could not reject her gentle kindness offered in simple innocence by a grateful heart. Flight was his only resource; but he was a prisoner and had no power to fly. Chained down to the sole society most dangerous to his peace, it seemed as if he were tied to the stake to endure to the utmost the fiery ordeal of temptation. Then again, he strove to cast the thoughts from him, and gained a brief interval of sleep; but visions all coloured by the same gloomy hues either disturbed repose, or made him start up again to think of the same themes and wrestle with the same dark adversaries.

At length the day dawned; and, rising quickly from his bed, he hurried to the window, opened it, and gazed forth. Oh, how sweet was the fresh aspect of the morning to

his wearied eyes, as calm and reinvigorating to the mind as the gentle breath of the early summer day to the heated cheek it blew upon. The golden light spread through the valley and over the hills, sunk in amongst the deep woods, and threw out the masses of the dark trees from a soft background of luminous mist; while, here and there, a woodman's fire or cottage chimney sent up wreaths of faint blue smoke, rolling in graceful lines amongst the leaves and branches.

The day went on in its usual course: many hours of solitude, broken only by the entrance of a servant or the guard. Algernon Grey found no means of relieving the tedious passing of the time. He tried to read, but he could not. He turned from the instrument of music he had asked for, with a sickened feeling, as if sweet sounds would but increase the bitterness of meditation. Thought, devouring thought, consumed the moments; till towards evening, when the guard threw open the door, and to his surprise he saw his old and

attached servant Antony enter and approach him. The man's face wore a mingled expression, as if he was striving to keep up his usual appearance of gaiety, when in truth his heart was sad; and his master would not suffer one who, he well knew, loved him dearly to see how bitterly circumstances made him feel his imprisonment.

"Well, Tony," he said, in a cheerful tone; "so they have given you admission at length."

"Yes, my lord," replied the man; "they have come down from their high flight, now that they find their heavy bravo will not do.—I hope your lordship has not fancied I have been negligent; for I have been up here twice a day, and the page as often. The little devil would have stabbed the guard, I believe, to get entrance, if I had not stopped him; but we two are not enough to storm the castle, and we should have only got ourselves in limbo too. However, to-night they let me in to carry you these letters, which a courier

brought just now from England ; so there are now four of us ; and, if you like, methinks between us all we can contrive to get you out."

Algernon Grey shook his head with a smile, and taking the letters, he read the addresses with a listless, uninterested look.

"No, no, Tony," he said ; "they would only catch us again, before we had gone far.—But what was that you said of the young Baron of Oberntraut?"

"Why, the fellow you fought with, sir," answered the servant, "if you mean him, is getting better hourly. He was out in the garden up there to-night, by the bank of the river, sitting in a chair. You have not hurt him much, it seems. Pity you did not send your sword through his maw. The bleeding will do him good, however ; for he is mighty pale, and won't affront an English gentleman again, I warrant. I saw him myself when I rode up to get tidings. There he was, sitting all white and colourless in a great gilt chair

against the wall of the house, like a wax-candle in a sconce."

While the man had been speaking, his master had slowly approached the window, opened one of the letters, and was reading the first lines as his servant concluded. For a moment or two the subject of the epistle seemed to produce no great effect. He smiled slightly, ran his eye down to the bottom, skimming carelessly the contents, and then turned the page. The next moment, however, he seemed to be stirred by strong emotions ; his brow contracted, his eye flashed, his lip quivered, and the hot angry blood rose in an instant into his cheek and overspread his forehead with a fiery glow. Straining his eyes upon the sheet, he read on ; and, when he had done, held the letter open in his hand for several minutes, gazing sternly up into the air. He uttered not a word ; but the servant could see how his heart beat, by the quivering of the paper in his hand. Then, throwing it down upon the table, he tore open the other hastily and read it like-

wise. The contents did not seem to mitigate his agitation, though they mingled a degree of scorn with the expression of his countenance. This time some portion of his emotion found vent in a few brief words: "So, so!" he cried. "So bold and shameless—and shall I be restrained by such scruples?—Nay, nay, this is too bad—England, farewell! You shall not feel my foot for many a day!"

"Ah, my lord," said the man, "things seem going on at a fine rate, truly; methinks, when one takes a part so boldly, the other may well choose his part too. Faith, I would let them whistle for me long enough, before I went."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Algernon Grey, turning upon him sharply.

"Why, my noble lord, I have had a letter, too, by Hob, the courier; and I dare say the news in mine and yours is all the same."

"And has it become the common scandal then?" said Algernon Grey thoughtfully. "So young, so fair, so haughty, and yet so shameless! Leave me, Tony, leave me, and come up

to-morrow early. Doubtless they will give you admission, if all goes well—I want nothing more to-night—leave me, I say.’

“Well, my lord, if I were you, I would not take it much to heart,” replied the man, lingering for a moment ere he departed. “There’s not much love lost on either side, I believe, and never was; and you will be just as well quit of a bad bargain.”

Algernon Grey waved his hand for him to leave the room, but answered not; and when the man was gone, he strode up and down the wide chamber for full half an hour with quick and agitated steps. Then, casting himself into a chair, he laughed aloud, exclaiming, “I am a fool!—Why should I grieve? Why let such idle passion tear me?—I love her not—have never loved her—I condemn, despise her—have ever scorned her pitiful pride, and but strove, against my nature, to bend my affections to my duty.—Let her take her course.—Nay, indeed, she has taken it.”

The door opened suddenly, and then, for the

first time, he perceived that night had fallen, as the light from the ante-chamber poured in; and he saw the form of Agnes, without distinguishing her features, standing in the doorway, like a graceful shadow.

“ Will you come to-night?” said that sweet, musical voice; and, starting up, Algernon Grey snatched his hat from the table, replying, “ Most willingly, fair Agnes.”

As they walked on, through the courts, along the Altan, out into the gardens, over the terrace, Agnes saw that a great change had come upon her companion. Far from seeming to have received any evil news from his native land, it appeared as if some heavy weight had been taken from his mind. His manner was light and cheerful; his words gay and full of unusual fire—somewhat wild and absent, indeed, at times; but still, the whole tone was sunshiny and very unlike the gloomy mood of the preceding night.

The difference made Agnes thoughtful. She asked herself, “ Is it his nature to be thus

variable?" But she would not believe it. There was something in her breast that would not let her think the slightest ill of him beside her. The picture of his character was already drawn by the hand of affection upon a woman's heart; and, when such is the case, stern, and hard, and continued must be the wearing power that can ever efface the lines. A new light seemed to break upon her; and at length she said, "I think I can divine that you have heard how much better your adversary is. It is said they will bring him into Heidelberg to-morrow."

"Yes, I have heard it," answered Algernon Grey, "and am exceedingly rejoiced to find his wound will not prove dangerous."

Agnes was satisfied; his new gaiety was accounted for; and, as they wandered on, she gave free course to all her own thoughts, as they sprang up from the deep well of the heart unobstructed to the lips. Once, indeed, she was a little frightened at her own feelings and at his manner. Not that he said ought to

alarm or agitate her ; but there was a tenderness mingled with the frank and rapid outpouring of all the ideas that seemed to cross his brain, which startled and moved her. But women have always some veil ready to hide agitating truths from their own eyes ; and Agnes dismissed the thought ere it had possessed her mind for a moment. Carried away by the quick and sparkling current of his conversation, her brain seemed to whirl as the mind followed him ; and he, in the turbulent emotions produced by the tidings he had received and the struggling love within his bosom, suffered himself to be hurried rapidly on, he saw not, he knew not, he cared not whither. Their perilous course in a frail bark some few days before down the furious torrent of the Neckar was but an emblem of the voyage of their two hearts along the troubled stream of love that night. Time flew on more rapidly than either of them knew ; the castle-clock striking ten roused them as it were from a dream ; and, returning to his prison, Algernon Grey, as before, parted

from Agnes in the ante-chamber. The moment he had entered his own room, and the door was closed, he cast himself into a seat, leaned his folded arms upon the table, and, as if utterly exhausted, let his head fall upon his arms; and there, for three long hours, without a change of attitude, he remained plunged in the chaos of wild, unformed, unregulated thoughts. An attendant came in, but he took no notice of him. He placed supper on the table, and invited him courteously to take some. He replied not, for he heard not; and the man, thinking that he slept, retired.

At the end of the time I have mentioned, the prisoner started up, brushed back the rich brown curls from his broad forehead with a bewildered look, and, taking a light, retired to bed and slept, strange to say, profoundly.

The sun had risen high; an attendant had twice entered the large room; and all the world was busy with the ordinary affairs of life, before Algernon Grey awoke from one of those deep, dreamless sleeps, which sometimes suc-

ceed to the exhausting conflict of passions in the human breast. For a few moments he could hardly tell where he was; he could with difficulty recollect the circumstances in which he was placed, or the events of the preceding day. But, as they rushed at length upon memory, a shadow came over his face; and again the question recurred, "What am I doing? Whither am I hurrying?" The gloom of the preceding days came over him more darkly than ever, and he passed a full hour in anxious thought.

"No, no!" he exclaimed at length; "whatever be the temptation, I will not do such wrong to her young and innocent heart as to seek its love, while there is no chance, no hope of our ultimate union. I will rather see her give her hand to another, and live on in loveless, cheerless solitude myself. Yet, if I am kept here, if I linger near her in this constant companionship, with her beauty and her grace before my eyes, her sweet voice sounding in my ears, her high yet gentle thoughts mingling

with and softening my own, how can I so guard myself as never to betray the secret of my bosom?—how can I restrain myself so as not to tell my love and seek hers in return? Men have tried the same before and have ever failed. I have no such confidence in my own strength, and I will not risk it; I will fly—whatever it cost to tear myself away, I will fly.”

The hours went by; and a little before noon the prisoner received a brief visit from Herbert. The news he brought was so far satisfactory, as it showed Algernon the prospect of his speedy liberation. His adversary had been removed into Heidelberg the day before, had not suffered in the least by the exertion, had passed a good night, and pronounced himself quite well. But the duration of the old officer's stay was so short, that no other information could be communicated. After dinner Algernon's servant appeared again, but he brought no tidings; and when his master inquired, with some surprise, what had become of his cousin, that he saw him not, the stout servant answered, with a laugh,

“ Oh, sir, he is woman-hunting; some fair lady here has him always at her heels; but, though Heaven forbid I should say I love him much, yet I do believe he has striven to serve you, in this matter at least; for I know he has been twice with the Elector and once with the Electress about your affairs.”

“ And why love you him not, Tony?” asked his master. “ I have seen, it is true, that you have less reverence for him than pleases me; but I would fain know the cause.”

“ I have known him from a boy,” replied the man drily; “ and, though he never did aught to injure or offend me, yet there are certain things that one sees, and hears, and knows, which, do what a man will, make up in the course of time an amount of love or disliking very difficult to be changed. I own I love him not; and, to say truth, I have found few that do who have known him as well; but it is no affair of mine, and, if you love him, I have nought to do but to be his humble servant.”

“ I trust you will show yourself so,” replied

his master ; “ first, as he is my kinsman ; next, as he is my friend.”

“ I will, my lord,” replied the man ; “ unless I can some time show you that he is not your friend ; for that’s a point I doubt.”

“ You are prejudiced,” answered Algernon Grey ; “ and I thought not to see one, who wants not sense, recollect the follies of a boy, long, long years afterwards.—Now leave me.”

“ It is not only follies I remember, good lord,” replied the servant gravely ; “ I never accused him of follies. It is not head he wants, it is heart. For ten long years I saw him in your father’s house, a child, a lad, almost a man ; and I know him well.”

“ Leave me,” said Algernon Grey sternly ; and the servant withdrew. But, if the truth must be told, his young master was more inclined to share his sentiments than he would admit. For some years he had not seen his cousin, ere he joined him on the continent. He had remembered him only as the companion

of his boyhood, elder by several years, but still bending to share all his sports and pastimes; devising pleasures for him, and breaking the dull ceremonies of a stately household. After they met again, however, he had seen much that pained and displeased him; and he felt sorry, not without good cause, that he had entered into one of those wild and romantic engagements with him, to travel together for a certain time under feigned names, which had been rendered common at that period by the publication of the most popular, but, at the same time, it must be said, the most idle romance that ever was written—"The Astrea." He turned his mind, however, from the subject as soon as possible, after the servant had left him; and now he tried to read and pass his time with any other thoughts than those of Agnes Herbert. All those who have made such efforts know how vain they are. She was ever before his eyes, ever present to his fancy; and he gave up the attempt, asking himself whether, if she came again that night,

he should go as before, or steadily refuse such dangerous companionship.

He was saved the struggle, however; for about five o'clock Herbert again presented himself, followed by a guard, and, taking Algernon's hand warmly, he said, "Come, my young friend, your imprisonment is drawing near an end. The Elector has sent for you, and, doubtless, it is to give you freedom; for this young Oberntraut is recovering fast. Come with me, and we shall soon hear more."

Algernon Grey followed willingly enough; and the English officer led him, by several of those passages and staircases through which he had passed with Agnes on the first night of his imprisonment, to the eastern part of the castle, where Frederic's own apartments were situated. At length, crossing an ante-chamber full of guards and attendants, they entered a hall where the Elector was waiting with his court. There was but a small attendance of the Palatinate nobility, it is true, not above fifteen or twenty persons being present; but

Algernon Grey saw several who had surrounded the Prince on the first night of his presentation, and amongst the rest the old Baron of Oberntraut.

The worthy chamberlain's countenance, notwithstanding the reports made of his son's health, did not seem more placable than when last the young Englishman had seen it; and that of the Elector bore a somewhat grave and embarrassed look. As the whole party were assembled not far from the door, Algernon Grey had not much time for observation before he stood within a step of the Elector, and to his surprise found Frederic's hand extended towards him. He took it instantly, and bent his head over it; and the Prince, in a tone of much kindness, at once began the conversation, saying:—

“I have been grieved, sir, to be forced by the laws and customs of my country to subject you to the inconveniences of imprisonment till such time as the results of your duel

with one of my officers, the Baron of Oberntraut, could be fully ascertained. We have an edict here repressing such encounters; but as you are a stranger to our laws, though amenable to them while in these dominions, I must say the fault was more his than yours. The Baron may now, however, be considered well; and I am willing to pass over the offence on both parts; in his case considering all that he has already undergone, and in yours, your ignorance of our laws. I have sent for you, therefore, to tell you, your imprisonment is at an end, and to reconcile you with the family of your late adversary. Henceforth, I trust, you will be friends, not enemies."

Algernon Grey was about to reply that he had never entertained the slightest enmity towards his opponent, when the old Lord of Oberntraut took a step forward and said, in a sharp tone, "I came here, noble prince, to seek reparation, and not friendship; and I beseech your Highness——"

But at that moment he was interrupted by

a low voice from behind, saying, "Will you allow me to pass, my Lord the Count?"

The gentleman thus addressed made way; and the next instant the Baron of Oberntraut himself came forward, ghastly pale, and apparently somewhat feeble, but yet walking with a firm step and an upright head. The moment he stood before the Elector he held forth his hand frankly to Algernon Grey, saying, "I, at least, sir, entertain no such feelings; I come here to ask your friendship, and to thank you for a lesson you have taught me, which will make me a wiser man to the end of my life. I have been somewhat spoiled by success and flattery, sir, and needed a check, such as this wound has given, to teach me that no man can always have his way in the world. You are the most skilful swordsman I have ever seen; you dealt nobly and honourably with me, and in this presence I declare that the whole fault, from first to last, was mine. I sought the quarrel, urged it on, led you to the place of the encounter; and I

do believe that, exposed by my rash anger to your cooler skill, my life was often at your mercy had you chosen to take it. I thank you, therefore, for the wound you gave, and trust you will forget the past, and take my offered hand."

"With my whole heart," answered Algernon Grey, pressing it warmly; "and I do assure you, Baron, that only the defence of my own life would have induced me to injure you. I could not help it, however; for you are not an adversary to be trifled with. Indeed it was more accident than aught else, which gave me a momentary advantage. Had not your foot slipped on the wet sward, the chance might have been against me, and I should have been lying still enough by this time."

The young baron smiled, with a look of great pleasure at this testimony to his skill; and the Elector, calling the old Lord of Oberntraut into one of the deep windows, said, "My lord, I intreat—nay, I command, that you let your anger drop, and cease all vain pursuit of

revenge. This is no ordinary man you have to deal with. I know him, though he believes I do not, and am aware not only that he is one of the high nobles of England, but also that he is sent hither on a secret mission of deep importance to my welfare."

"A spy, sir, you would say?" murmured the old lord, in a low bitter tone.

"Hush, sir!" cried the Elector, his brow growing dark; "no more of this, if you would merit the continuance of my favour. I am not so powerless that I cannot make my commands respected by my own court. You hear what your son has said. He exculpates him of all blame. No serious injury has been done; and I insist that you yield to reconciliation."

"As the boy is satisfied," replied the chamberlain, doggedly, "and in obedience to your Highness, I submit;" and turning towards Algernon Grey, he added, "By the commands of my Prince, sir, I am ready to let this matter drop; but I must advise you not to try such things again with—"

“Hush, hush, my father!” cried his son, “I will proclaim to all the world that there never was a more noble gentleman than he who now stands before you; and as you have hated him solely as my adversary, I do beseech you now to love him as my friend.”

“Well, sir, well,” replied the old lord, “I have nought to say; let the matter be passed and forgotten;” but it was evident that his ill-will was but little diminished, and his angry pride unpacified.

“Now,” said the Elector, with a courteous smile, “this all being settled, and animosities healed, we will part for the evening—and you, noble sir,” he continued, turning to Algernon Grey, “though I will only call you by the name you are pleased to assume, will, I trust, grace our court by your presence to-morrow at the hour of eleven. We have there matters of some weight, which we wish to make known to all friends and well-wishers, either of the Elector Palatine, or his lady, the

pearl of England; and we trust, that you may be ranked in both classes."

"I will not fail, your Highness," answered Algernon Grey; "but I fear it must be my audience of leave-taking."

"Not so, not so," replied the Elector; "we shall find means to keep you with us, I do not doubt. However that may be, farewell for the present;" and, passing through the opposite door with a large part of his train, comprising the old Baron of Oberntraut, he left the hall.

As soon as he was gone, Algernon Grey's late adversary once more grasped his hand, saying, "You must not go, my friend; the Elector has need of swords such as yours; ay, and of hearts and heads such as yours, too. If there is chivalry in your nature; if there is high spirit and generous enthusiasm—and I know there is—you will give him aid in his hour of need. I may be tied down to this spot by many things; but if you go with him, I know there is a better arm and better brain than any I could bring."

“Nay, not better,” answered Algernon Grey, “though equally devoted to any good cause.—But I know not what you mean, on what expedition he is bound, or what enterprise is before him.”

“I cannot tell you,” answered Oberntraut in a low voice; “and I cannot entertain you, as I could wish, at my own lodgings, on account of this sickness; but if you inquire for me to-morrow, ere you come hither, I will let you know more.—Now I must return; for, to say truth, I am tired. I never thought to know the day when I should say that a short walk and a brief conference were too much for my strength; but so it is, and I must go and lie down once more, and rest.”

The party broke up soon; but ere Algernon Grey quitted the hall for the purpose of returning to the place of his imprisonment, in order to see that all his effects were carefully carried down to the inn below, a gentleman approached, and, after shaking hands with him, said something in a low voice.

"This evening, if you please," answered Algernon Grey; "but what is it, Craven?"

His friend replied in a whisper; and a dark cloud immediately came over Algernon Grey's countenance.

"I know it all," he answered; "all that you can tell me, Craven. Come and see me, if you will. Right glad shall I be to spend an hour with you; but mention not that name again. Much is, doubtless, false; much is, doubtless, exaggerated; but much must be true that should not be so; and my own course is decided." Thus saying, he turned to Herbert, and, after a few words, walked back with him to the tower where he had been confined.

CHAPTER VI.

THE fair Princess of England, now in the pride of youth and beauty, in the full sunshine of prosperity and power, with one of the fairest portions of the earth for her dominions, with admiration, flattery, esteem, love, almost adoration, rising up like incense before her, but with so sad and dark a fate for the future, sat in her silver chamber, surrounded by all the beauty she could collect from her husband's dominions. There were only three men present, two old German noblemen, and, strange to say, our acquaintance William Lovet. The hour was nearly the same as that at which Algernon Grey was summoned to the presence of the Elector before his release; and every face

around was full of satisfaction, as the Princess and her countryman talked somewhat lightly of the imprisonment of Lovet's kinsman, and the prospects before him; using the French tongue.

The Englishman stood before the chair of the Electress, with his hat and plume dangling from his hand, his head slightly bent, his ear turned to hear the Princess's words, and a slight sarcastic smile upon his finely-turned lip.

"Good faith! your Highness," he said, in answer to something the Princess communicated, "I know not well whether to rejoice or be sad at the tidings you give me."

"Sad!" exclaimed Elizabeth, with a look of much surprise; "have you not been urging his liberation?"

"That was a duty," answered Lovet, with the same meaning smile; "but there may be unpleasant duties, madam."

"Are you his friend, his kinsman?" exclaimed the Electress.

“Both,” answered Lovet; “but yet, friendship may have unpleasant duties too. I urged his liberation, not because I thought it best for him, but because it was what he had a right to demand.”

“Is he so wild and rash, then,” demanded Elizabeth, “that, like a lion, he must be kept in a cage?—But you are jesting; I see it on your face.”

“Good faith! not so, lady,” answered the Englishman; “but all men do not know what is best for them; and my cousin is one of them—a rare keen judge for others, and not for himself.—Now, look around, your Highness. What do you see?”

“Too many things for a catalogue,” answered the Princess; “vases, statues, hangings of blue and silver, many fair ladies, and—”

“Stop there, I beg,” said Lovet. “All these bright things make me judge that it were wise for any gay and courtly gentleman to stay amongst them; but these same things—nay, their very beauty”—and he ran his eye over

the circle round the Electress, calling forth a well-pleased smile on many of the faces near—
“have quite the contrary effect on my good cousin, making him seek to fly such sweet temptation; and, like a wandering friar, or our good friend St. Anthony, resist the devil, love, Hymen, and the rest, by solitude and maceration.”

The Electress laughed and he proceeded; “We are of different judgments, he and I; while I am free, I stay even where I am; no sooner is he at liberty than he flies, depend upon it.—But if I could have a private word with your Highness, I might tell you more, and say things worthy of your ear.”

Elizabeth gazed round the circle for an instant, and then said, speaking English, “There is no one who understands our native tongue.”

A momentary hesitation seemed to come over William Lovet; and he paused for an instant, ere he replied. It was seldom that such a thing happened to him; for he was ready and quick at repartee, and had, as is

the case with many a shrewd and intriguing man, a habit, as adept as nature, of veiling his direct meaning in figures which implied more than was actually said. He rarely found a difficulty in making his hearers easily comprehend all that he meant, while he guarded against an accurate report of anything that he had instigated, requested, or desired, by rendering the expressions in themselves so unmeaning, that, when repeated to an unprepared ear, their sense, if they had any, seemed very different from that which the circumstances at the moment gave them. In the present instance, however, his task was one of some difficulty; for he sought to convey to a mind, naturally shrewd and acute, and accustomed to deal very much with hyperbole and metaphor, a false idea in the general, while all the particulars were in themselves true.

So long did he remain silent, that the Electress at length said in a tone of impatience, "Well, sir, what would you say?"

"Good faith! your Highness," he answered

in a frank tone; "I do not know well how to begin. I must not forget that it is my cousin I am speaking of; but yet I wish to give you such an insight into the matter that you may judge fairly of it by yourself. From various circumstances, which it is little worth while to speak of, this good cousin of mine has conceived a horror and fear of woman's love."

"I can conceive the circumstances," answered the Electress; "his history is not wholly unknown to me, Master Lovet."

"Then you have the whole affair," answered her visitor, catching gladly at the admission; "I need say nothing more. You have seen with your own eyes, know right well, must have heard and marked the attractions which your court possesses for my poor cousin Algernon. Within two days he took fright at his own sensations, and was for flying as fast as possible; but a duel, a knight-errant-like adventure, imprisonment, and the devil to boot, I believe, have detained him here even

till now; and Love's chain, I doubt not, is round and round his heart by this time. Nevertheless, he will snap his fetters as soon as his limbs are free; and as I have promised, by an oath more binding than a marriage vow, to go with him wherever he goes for the next year, you may well judge that I am not very anxious to see his prison doors unlocked."

Elizabeth meditated for a minute or two, and then answered, "I should have thought the mission which brought him hither would detain him somewhat longer at our court."

"There are two objections to that supposition," replied Lovet: "first, that whatever object he had in coming hither—of which I know nothing; for he has his secrets as well as I have mine—must be attained by this time. Depend upon it, your Highness, if he had any object at all, it was but to examine, to see, to inquire, and nothing more. He must have seen enough of your court, must have heard enough of coming events, for a quick mind like his to have formed its own conclusions."

“That is one objection to my view,” replied the Electress; “what is the second?”

“A very simple one,” said William Lovet, “namely, that the court of the Count Palatine is very soon to become, if what men say be true, the court of a great king. Heidelberg is about to lose its splendour, and those who stay there may study or may sing amongst nightingales and professors, with sweet voices and deep learning; but no courtly auditory, and but small company.”

The Electress smiled. “Such things may be,” she said, in a grave pondering tone, seeming to consider each word; “but yet, my good sir, as all things must come to an end, so must this gentleman’s visit to our court. Only I would rather—whatever my husband’s decision may be upon matters which have been bruited about somewhat too largely—I would rather, I say, that a noble gentleman of my own land, supposed to be sent hither expressly by my father, should not take his departure immediately that the Elector’s resolution is made public.”

Lovet saw his advantage, and exclaimed at once, "Heaven forefend! it would be most detrimental!"

"Highly so," rejoined the Electress. "Rumours, true or false, assign to this young gentleman a high place in the world's esteem; the confidence of his own sovereign in the task of watching here the proceedings relative to the Bohemian crown, and of acting according as circumstances shall seem to need. It will certainly, as you say, be most detrimental, if, immediately after the Elector's decision is known, he were to withdraw himself instantly from our court, from any private motives such as you mention. Men would instantly say, that the step we were about to take was disapproved of by the crown whence we have the best right to look for assistance and support. Little, indeed, have we had hitherto; but such an act on the part of your friend would be fatal. We all know what is the effect of high countenance in the outset of a great undertaking; and I need not tell you,

that my father's lukewarmness in this cause has already created difficulties, and disheartened our followers."

Lovet laid his finger on his temple, and seemed to consider deeply the subjects brought before him. But, if the truth must be told, this thoughtful mood was assumed; and he answered the next moment with a sudden exclamation, as if some bright thought had struck him, "Were it not better that you took him with you to Bohemia? His appearance at Prague, with all the rumours going before him which your Highness has mentioned, would give hope and confidence, would raise the spirits of the people, would depress and keep in check the adverse party, and would add an ingredient tending to strengthen union, which is all that would seem wanting to complete success."

"But would he go?" exclaimed Elizabeth. "The same motives that made him eager to quit Heidelberg, would surely withhold him from Prague."

"When we set a trap for a linnet," said

Lovet, "we take care to conceal the wires. 'Tis needless that your Highness should say, that either the Lady Agnes goes with you, or the fair Countess of Laussitz."

The Princess smiled; for she not unwillingly mixed herself with the small policy of her husband's court, and took some pleasure in the cunning parts of diplomatic intrigue. She made no answer, however, and Lovet proceeded:—

"If ever there was a gallant and chivalrous spirit in this world it is my cousin Algernon's. To serve a lady with his sword, or his heart's best blood, would be the pride of his life, provided he did not fear that by so doing he would bind himself in somewhat too strong a chain. At your first call, the spirit of his race and his name will rise to defend your cause before the world. A Lady, his Princess, the love of all hearts, the admiration of all eyes, would find a right willing servant, and one who in the camp, or court, or counsel, could do great deeds. Ready and willing, I take upon myself

to say, he would be, if one fair lady's name was not mentioned in your train."

The Princess mused, and seemed somewhat embarrassed. "I have always intended," she said, "that if we go—of which I as yet know nothing—Agnes should go with me; I have told her so. She would look upon it as a slight if I did not take her. She has been to me almost as a sister, since I have been here—but yet I will speak with her; for much must be sacrificed for a great object."

"Nay, your Highness, speak with her not," answered Lovet, laughing; "leave her not behind. Once he has promised you the service of his sword, he will not break his word, nor withdraw from the contract; but there is no need, in naming those who are to accompany you, that all shall be mentioned at the first. Omit some names, which may be added afterwards as you may think fit. Heaven forefend that a high princess shall not have right and title to change her mind seven times a day, as well as a washerwoman's daughter!"

"I understand," answered Elizabeth, laughing, "I understand; but you think, then, he will not take flight if he finds that this fair dangerous little friend of mine is one of the train, after all?"

"No fear, no fear," replied Lovet; "once promised, he is yours for life or death; and good faith! to say the truth, 'tis fair this lady should be of the party. When he once finds her sweet companionship fixed upon him beyond the possibility of escape, he will yield himself gaily to his fate, put on the Celadon, and humanize himself a little, which is all that he wants to make him perfect in his way. Never was statue, or hewn block of stone, from Lot's wife down to the works of Praxiteles, more cold or uncomfortable as a companion than my good cousin Algernon, solely from his lamentable fear of giving way to the fire in his own heart. For my part, I think a little honest love gives the crowning touch to all excellence. With the virtue which the old Romans attributed to the fine arts, it softens manners,

purifies the heart and spirits, elevates the character, and takes from us that touch of the wild beast, which is always to be found in what my great-grandmother, who was a Lollard,—Heaven keep her from purgatory !—used to call ‘the natural man.’”

“I believe it does, sir,” answered the Electress, amused, and even pleased, with the strange picture his conversation displayed of many qualities apparently very opposite, and not knowing that all which seemed good was thrown in to make the dish suit the palate of the person to whom it was presented,—“I believe it does ; but it must be, as you say, honest love to do so.”

“Well, beautiful princess,” replied Lovet, with a low laugh that he could not suppress,—one of those light, demoralizing, satanic laughs, which attack virtuous principles, unassailable by any argument—“I only speak of honest love. The thought of nought else could ever enter into my good cousin’s heart ; he is as pure and innocent as what Will Shakspeare calls a suck-

ing dove ; and that love, when he finds he cannot escape from it, will be a chivalrous bond to your court and service for ever."

"And your own love, Master Lovet," asked the Princess ; "You don't suppose I have been blind to your devotion to a certain fair lady? What of your own love?"

"Oh, immaculate and high," answered Lovet, with his sneering smile ; "the pure conception of enthusiastic devotion—a passion, like the flame on Vesta's altar, burning for ever with a holy light—no smoke, high Princess, no red and fiery glare, but blue and thin and cold, like the flame of spirits on a sponge—quite spiritual, quite spiritual, I can assure you"—and he laughed again in bitter mockery of the romantic character of the age, which could conceive that love can be separated from the fire that is its life. "Surely, surely, bright lady, if others may be permitted to play Strephons, I am not to be blamed if I *Celadon* it a little, though the languishing eyes of the Countess of Laussitz do

look as if they would wake the terrestrial Eros, rather than the celestial."

In spite of herself, the Princess could not but smile; but, putting on a grave look the moment after, she replied, "Well, well. Far be it from me to lay any restraint upon gallant and noble devotion to the fair; it is the high moving power to all great actions; and on it am I ready to rest for support myself, should need be; but remember, Master Lovet, I will have no scandals in my court; that is an indispensable condition to your sojourn with it."

"Scandal, your Highness! Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Lovet; "I would not have a scandal for the world. Always consider what such a thing would imply; I declare the very thought of it would spoil my breakfast, had I not made one good meal before I came out. The consequences would be frightful: first, I should lose your Highness's favour; next, I should have to cut the throat of a little fat, small-eyed husband—work for a pork-butcher, but not for a cavalier with clean hands; and last, I should have to

marry the fair dame myself, which would certainly put an end to all our fine Platonics. No, no, by that fair hand I swear, you shall have no scandal by any act of William Lovet."

"Well, Sir William," answered the Electress, "you will recollect that false names do not cover well-known faces; that your reputation is not quite so clear and bright as a new crimson velvet cloak, laced with gold; and that, knowing the person and his ways, I have my eye upon him. As to the other matter, I will think of what you have said concerning your noble cousin, and will act after due deliberation. We must not lose him on any account, if it be possible to keep him; but, ere I decide on aught, I must speak with his Highness; for these are matters, in regard to which a woman's judgment is not worth much."

"Oh, a woman's judgment for ever!" cried William Lovet; "in love, war, wine, and policy, there is nothing like a woman's judgment—But now I will take my leave; for I see these fair ladies around marvelling sadly at our long con-

versation in an unknown tongue—though, Heaven help us! what we should have done on many great occasions I know not, if certain wise gentlemen of antiquity had not thought fit to build a high and very impious tower of Babel, and been cursed with strange languages, which have proved very serviceable to their posterity. However, if we talk farther in one of our Babel dialects before these bright dames, their sweet wits will find or frame treason in it; and I shall be impeached to the Elector for talking something more soft than German to his lovely Princess. Thus, then, I humbly take my leave; and, if you follow my sage advice regarding my good cousin, I will so play my part as to insure that he is bound hand and foot to promote your great and glorious undertakings.”

CHAPTER VII.

ABOUT an hour after his liberation, Algernon Grey sat alone in his chamber at the Golden Stag, absorbed in deep meditation. The servants came and went, bringing down from the castle all those parts of his baggage which had been carried up during his imprisonment, but he took no heed of them; and even Frill, the page, obtained little notice, though he endeavoured strongly to attract attention by eloquent speech and graceful demeanour. The great question on which man's fate turns so frequently throughout life: "How shall I act at this next step?" was then before his eyes; but his mind wandered back into the past, and,

scrutinizing what had occurred during the last three days, Algernon Grey could not free himself altogether from the reproaches of his own heart. "I have been weak," he said, "I have been wrong; I have yielded to circumstances, where I should have resisted them; I have been tender in tone and manner, where I should have been cold as ice. Better, far better, that she should think me rude, discourteous, unkind, than that she should have hereafter to say, that I did her wrong and sought her love secretly, when I could not ask it honourably. Even now it is far wiser to encounter any sort of reproach than give good cause for dark, well-founded accusation. I will go—that is determined. To-morrow's sunset shall not find me in Heidelberg."

His thoughts ran on from that starting point into the future, and he asked himself, "What was before him; what was the path he should pursue; what was the end to which it would lead?" The prospect was dark and gloomy: no light shone upon it; no variety appeared to

cheer it, but one wild waste of life spread out before him, overhung with clouds, and bearing nought to shelter or console. He felt like one of those anchorites of old, who voluntarily quitted the sunshine and the richness of cultivated nature, to plunge into the gloom and sterility of the desert. He felt that, at that moment, there was beauty and brightness around him, all that could charm the eye or captivate the heart; that gaiety and pleasure, the exercise of the mind, the sport of the fancy, the kindling of passion, the ecstasy of love, the wild enthusiastic delights of a free heart reveling undisturbed in the enjoyment of the best gifts of Heaven, were ready for his grasp, if he chose to seize them, with but one obstacle—but that obstacle, to his mind, insurmountable. He felt that he was about to fly them all, voluntarily to resign everything that his heart longed for; with the parched mouth and thirsty lip to renounce the cooling draught of the deep well of happiness open before him; and to speed on through the arid desert of

existence, with no one to support or cheer, with not one spring of the sweet waters of comfort to give him hope along his desolate course. Barren, barren spread out the years before him. As he looked through the long sunless vista, it seemed as if an open tomb was all that closed the far perspective to receive him at the end of his weary journey, and afford the dull sleep of death and corruption. "May it come soon!" he thought, "may it come soon!" and, with his hands pressed upon his eyes, he remained pondering bitterly over his sad, strange fate.

"Ah, Algernon," cried a voice, as the door opened, "you look marvellous joyful over your emancipation. One would think you had been in a dungeon a whole year, to see your intemperate gaiety at the recovery of your freedom. But I knew how it would be, and I told the Electress the result. I urged her strongly to keep you in your soft bondage, telling her, that to set you at liberty was but to restore you to the slavery of a most perverse education.—But how goes it, my good cousin?"

“Well, I thank you, William,” answered Algernon Grey, rising and shaking off his gloom, determined to encounter Lovet’s keen jests with a careless tone. “Faith, you are quite right, my cousin. The cheerful society that you afforded me every day in prison made captivity so sweet, that I could have staid in it for ever.”

“See the ingratitude of man!” cried Lovet, laughing. “I have given him up one-third of my whole time, and yet he is not satisfied, although, by the code of love and gallantry, as he well knows, the other two-thirds were not my own to give; they were pledged, pawned, impignorated, and I might as well have stolen a jewel out of Madam de Laussitz’s ear, or taken any ring off her finger but one, with as much right and justice as I could have taken one minute more than I did to bestow upon my kinsman’s affairs. Did I not thrice see the Elector? Did I not twice see the Electress? Did I not make love to seven of her ladies? Did I not bow nine times to nine

old gentlemen? Did I not fee a page for an audience? And actually embrace a chamberlain—the most disgusting task of all—entirely to obtain his liberty? although I knew the first use he would make of it would be to work his own unhappiness and my disappointment.”

“Nay, William, nothing of the kind,” replied Algernon Grey. “We are all upon the search for happiness, you and I alike; and each must seek his in his own way. I thank you for all the trouble you have taken; but birds when they are free will use their wings; and so will I to-morrow. I have not been so long accustomed to a cage as to love its neighbourhood.”

“Stay, stay,” cried Lovet. “Your pardon, my good cousin! I am not on the search for happiness; that is a wild-goose chase, always beginning, never ending; still disappointing, offering fruition nowhere. Pleasure, pleasure is what I seek—the honey that is in every flower. If we exhaust one, why let us fly on to another. The bee for ever, Algernon!

That industrious insect is my emblem. Good faith! I will ask the heralds if I may not put it in my arms. Like it, I seek the sweets of life, wherever they are to be found; and the wild thyme, or the cultivated rose is all the same to me."

"But a spendthrift-bee," answered Algernon Grey; "for you lay up no store for the future, but consuming all the honey that you find, and building no waxy cells for future years. After all, the emblem is not a pleasant one; for were you as thrifty as the best, our master, Fate, would come and smoke you in the hive."

"I will give him no cause," answered Lovet, gaily; "for I will eat my honey while I have got it, and hoard none to tempt his ruthless hands. But a truce to bantering, Algernon; I have really laboured hard to set you free, thinking that a much better way of spending my time than piping to you in prison, like Blondel to good King Richard. But now what is it you intend to do? I have trusted

and hoped, that a few hours' quiet reflection, in an airy room up three pair of stairs, would turn the fresh must of your young proprieties to good sound wine, and teach you that where you have all before you that can make life happy, it is needless to go, like a drunken man with a purse full of gold, and flip the ducats with your thumb-nail into a draw-well."

"What do you mean?" asked his cousin; "I intend to throw nothing away that is good. Base coin is as well in a draw-well as anywhere else."

"Nay, nay, be frank," exclaimed Lovet; "I mean that you do not surely intend to quit this place so soon as you have once threatened."

"I see no reason why I should stay," answered Algernon Grey.

"What! not love?" cried the other. "Nay, my good cousin, do not look detected! Can you suppose, that I have not seen, that I do not know? By every sign and token, from an untied collar, to a hat put on wrongside before—

from a sigh in the middle of a well-turned sentence, to an answer made as irrelevant to the purpose as an old maid's comment on last Sunday's sermon, you are in love, man—up to the neck in that soft quagmire, love. And, good faith ! I must own, too, that, considering your inexperience of such things, and the resistance of your nature to all sweet influences, you have not chosen amiss — bright eyes, sweet lips, a cheek like a ripe peach, hair bright and glossy as the sunshine on a bank of moss, a form that might have made Helen envious, and false Paris doubly false."

Algernon Grey seated himself at the table again, and leaned his head upon his hand, with his eyes thoughtfully bent down, and a red spot in his cheek. He would not, he could not say that he did not love; but he was pained that his clear-sighted cousin had divined the truth.

In the mean time Lovet proceeded, seeing clearly that Algernon did not listen; but trusting that a word or two at least would fall

through the inattentive ear upon the mind, and produce, perhaps, a more lasting effect than if they were listened to and answered.

“Stay, Algernon, stay,” he cried; “stay and be happy. Cast not away from you, for vain fantasies, joy that is seldom afforded to any man more than once in life—opportunities which neglected never return, and once lost, leave unceasing regret behind them. Stay, and make her yours.”

“Make her mine!” exclaimed Algernon Grey. “How?”

“Oh! a thousand courses are open,” answered his cousin. “Shall I point them out?”

Algernon waved his hand and shook his head, with a bitter smile; “I see none,” he answered.

“Well, listen,” replied Lovet. “This Herbert, this uncle, is a soldier to fortune—a man of no rank or position to bar the path to one of your name and station. Troublous times are coming on; and over this fair Palatinate will, ere long, roll a sea of disasters, which

will break bonds, shake ties, and, in a wide chaos of confusion, leave opportunities which a wise lover would profit by."

"Nay, nay," cried Algernon Grey, starting up and raising himself to his full height, "no more of such a theme; you do not understand me, William."

"Right well, my cousin," replied Lovet, with one of his sarcastic smiles; "but I thought it best to put the worst case first, and set your shrewish puritanism in arms, by displaying the path that any other wicked worldlings would take. The fair lady's heart is, doubtless, more than half gone already; and though, perhaps, like all these proud beauties, she might start a little at first from the thought of such unconditional surrender, yet that said little tyrant Love would compel obedience to his commands. Then, however, there is another course to take. The high-stilted course, in all respects suited to your stiff and magnificent ideas."

"Ay, what is that?" cried Algernon Grey,

turning quickly toward him, and betrayed, by a sudden gleam of hope, into a greater display of his feelings than he could have desired.

Lovet suppressed the smile, that half curled his lip, ere his cousin saw it; though he knew well that even to have raised up for a moment a vision of happiness before his cousin's eyes, was so much gained for his own plans. "The matter, methinks, is very easy," he answered; "you have nought to do but first to make her yours beyond recall; and then, being much too virtuous to remain in an unhallowed union, give her the deepest proof of your tenderness and love by breaking this boy-marriage of yours with the Lady Catherine. What right have fathers and mothers, uncles and aunts, or grandfathers and guardians either, to pledge a boy of fifteen by a vow at the altar to an engagement for life, the very nature of which he does not understand? It is both absurd and wicked; there may be many doubts whether it is lawful—"

"None, none," cried Algernon Grey; "it

has taken place a hundred times. Poor Essex and myself are in the same sad case."

"Ay, but he is worse off than you," answered Lovet; "for he, like a fool, went back and took her home, while you have wisely staid away with the broad sea between you. Now, though the lady and her good friends may very likely, as the matters stand, hold fast by an engagement which secures to her high rank and large possessions as your wife; yet, if she finds you entangled irrevocably with another, she will soon consent to that which you desire, and on a joint petition to the peers this baby-matrimony will be soon annulled."

"She will not consent," said Algernon Grey, bitterly; "at least her friends will not;" and then he added, fixing his eyes upon Lovet, "and is it you, William, who can wish that I should thus treat your own fair cousin?"

"Oh," answered Lovet, with a laugh, "it will not break her heart. I know her well—better than you do, Algernon; and I advise you for the happiness of both. This is no

common case of perfidy. What does she know of you to make her love you? or give one sigh because you love another? Do you think, my fair cousin, that your great qualities are so apparent, or your fine person so attractive, that one short sight of you at the altar at the age of fifteen, tricked out in a white satin doublet, purfled with blue, and laced with gold, is quite sufficient to make her die of love for you? or, what were more marvellous still, to preserve a holy constancy of maidenly affection during seven long years of absence? Pooh, pooh! she is not of that spirit at all, I can tell you. If she thought of you at all, when last she saw you, it was but as a pretty, well-dressed doll; and doubtless, had they left you with her then, she would have stuck a new farthingale round your neck better to her taste, or put you into a cradle and tried to rock you to sleep. She has got other notions now; but, for aught we know, you may not be the object of them."

"Perhaps not," replied Algernon Grey, setting his teeth hard; "perhaps not, Lovet,—

I have reason to think so!—But now mark me, my good cousin, and you know that I am firm in keeping my resolutions; I have seen a fair and lovely creature here, beautiful, kind, innocent, high minded. I would as soon pollute that creature, if I could, as I would destroy the beauty of her face; I would as soon bring wretchedness into her heart, as I would break those lovely limbs upon the rack—so, once for all, no more of this. I shall leave Heidelberg to-morrow.”

Lovet paused, and thought for a moment, laying his hand upon his brow, with a studied air of meditation: “I thought it was on Saturday next,” he said, “that the Elector went.”

“That the Elector went!” repeated Algernon Grey; “I know not what you mean, William.”

“Pshaw, my good cousin,” answered Lovet; “you do not suppose that I am not aware Frederic has been urging you to go with him in this expedition to Bohemia. I do not mean to say that you are making your love for Agnes Herbert an excuse to me for a rash consent to

the Elector's wild and unprofitable scheme ; but you will not deny, that, tempted by the prospect of renown in arms, and strange adventures in a distant country, you have taken advantage of the offer, thinking at the same time to divert your mind from what you judge dangerous thoughts, and quit a society that you love too much."

" I will deny it altogether," answered Algernon Grey, calmly. " The Elector has never mentioned the name of Bohemia in my hearing ; I was not aware he had accepted this thorny crown, or that he was going either soon or late."

" Why, it is all over the castle and the town," cried Lovet ; " and if he have not asked you, he will do it, be you sure. Craven goes with him—"

" And the Princess?" demanded Algernon.

" She goes, or follows immediately," said his cousin, " like a true dame of romance, she tells me, with but two ladies and two waiting women, some half-dozen antique gentlemen, and a troop of horse."

Algernon Grey mused, calculating whether it was probable that Agnes would be one of those selected to accompany the Electress. At length he asked, in a somewhat hesitating manner, "Did you hear the ladies' names who go with her?"

"Oh, yes," answered Lovet; "one was the Baroness Lœwenstein, whom you saw the other night; the other a Countess, with a hard name I do not recollect, and would not utter if I did; all I know, alas! is, that it is not Laussitz.—But be prepared, my fair cousin: for, depend upon it, the Elector will ask you; and, if you are not mad, you will plead some other occupations; for nothing will come of this rash scheme but disaster and hard blows. He is a gallant Prince, it is true, and will, doubtless, have to aid him a brave and manly chivalry; but the odds against him are too great. Spain and Savoy, and Burgundy, the imperial power and three-fourths of the empire, papal gold and intrigue, and Italian mercenaries enough to conquer a new world; while France nego-

tiates, England hesitates, and Holland takes care of itself. You had better frame some excuse; so with that warning I will leave you; for there is a pair of soft violet eyes looking for me as I ride up the hill."

Algernon Grey smiled. It was not at his cousin's allusion to the Countess of Laussitz, but rather, that Lovet should think he could be deterred by such arguments as had been used. The reader may inquire if Lovet thought they would deter him. It would seem not; and even Algernon Grey became suspicious as he meditated.

"I will make myself sure," he said, after pondering for some time. "It is more than probable she will remain with the Electress-mother; and if she do, this adventure is as good as any other to fill up a space of time.—I will go up and take leave of her and her uncle to-night; for, perchance I may not see them at the court to-morrow."

His heart sank as he thought of that leave-taking; and he shrank from the task, which he

felt it would not be courteous to leave unperformed. Minutes and hours passed by ; and it was late in the evening before he went ; but at length he set out on foot, and, taking his way by what is still called, I believe, the Burg-weg, he reached the gates of the castle, and obtained admission. As usual, the courts and passages were filled with a moving multitude ; but Algernon Grey walked straight on, noticing no one till he reached the tower in which Colonel Herbert's lodging was situated, and, mounting the stairs, he knocked at the heavy oaken door. A voice said,—“ Come in ;” but it was not that of the English officer ; and the moment after he stood before Agnes Herbert, who sat writing at a table alone. She started up, when she saw him, with a joyful smile ; and, giving him her hand, congratulated him on his liberation. But, after a few brief sentences had been spoken, her manner became more grave ; and she said, “ You were seeking my uncle ; but he has just gone forth, leaving me to copy this paper for him.”

"I came," said Algernon Grey, in a calm and firm, but, in spite of himself, a very sad tone, "to bid him adieu, as I thought it more than likely, from his busy occupations, that I might not see him at the court to-morrow morning."

"Adieu!" said Agnes. "Are you going soon, then?" and as she spoke her face turned deadly pale.

"I must go, I fear, to-morrow," replied Algernon Grey, "as soon as I have taken leave of the Elector and the Electress. The hour named for receiving me is at eleven. Will you be there?"

"I think not," answered Agnes, in a voice that trembled slightly.

"Then, dear lady, I will bid you farewell now," said Algernon Grey, using a strong command over every word and every tone. "Believe me, I am deeply grateful for all the kindness you have shown me, and shall remember the days I have passed here, though several have been days of impri-

sonment, as amongst the brightest things of life."

He had intended, when he went thither, to explain to her his situation ; and had Agnes uttered one word, which could have led to the subject, it would have been done at once. But for a time she remained silent ; and he felt that to obtrude such a topic would be but too plainly to indicate the feelings of his heart towards herself.

When she did reply, she merely said, "You are generous to express any gratitude to me. I have but shown you common kindness, while all the debt is on my side. I, too, shall recollect these hours with pleasure, as having enabled me, however poorly, to show the thankfulness that is in my heart for the noble and gallant conduct which delivered me at a moment when a terrible death seemed certain. I do not think my uncle will be present, either, to-morrow ; but I know he will grieve much not to see you before you go ; and if you like to give him such satisfaction, you will find him at the fort, called

the Trutzkaiser, where he is causing some alterations to be made."

She spoke quite calmly, though her cheek still remained colourless. At one or two words, indeed, her voice trembled; but there was no other emotion visible.

Algernon Grey took her hand, and pressed his lips upon it, saying, "Farewell! Agnes, farewell!"

"Farewell!" she answered; "may you ever be as happy as I am sure you deserve!"

He shook his head sadly, withdrew, and closed the door.

The moment he was gone, Agnes sank into the chair where she had been sitting, covered her eyes with her hand, and seemed to gasp for breath. The next instant, however, she raised her head high, cast back the glossy hair from her face, and exclaimed, "This is nonsense, this is folly! People, with their idle warnings, have put such vain imaginations in my head. But they are gone, and that is over;" and, drawing the paper to her, she strove to write again.

CHAPTER VIII.

ONCE more the courts of the castle of Heidelberg were crowded with horses and servants; once more guest after guest was arriving, not now for the purposes of revelry and mirth, but for the more serious object of hearing the decision of the Prince upon a question destined to affect the course of his whole life.

Amongst the rest who rode in, followed by their servants, were the two young Englishmen, with whom this history has been so busy. There was no hesitation now as to their admission; and, following some gentlemen, who had dismounted in haste before them, they were soon in the hall, where the Elector was receiving his

court. No ladies were present, but a door was open on his left, through which the sweet tones of woman's voice were heard; and Algernon Grey remarked, that several of those present, though not all, after having spoken for a moment with the Prince, passed on, and entered the chamber to which that door led.

Through the greater part of the crowd—for the hall was already nearly full—seemed to reign a sort of joyful enthusiasm. Every countenance beamed with high thoughts; every voice spoke in gay tones; and nothing but satisfaction seemed to be spread around by the tidings, which were now general throughout the whole. If one or two of the noblemen, indeed, who stood immediately round the prince, bore a graver and more sedate aspect, it might well be attributed to courtly ceremony; and Frederic's own face, though there was nothing like thoughtless merriment upon it, was cheerful and serene, as if well and fully contented with the determinations to which he had come.

After waiting for a few minutes till several

others had passed, Algernon Grey and his cousin approached and saluted the Prince.

"You have come somewhat late, gentlemen," he said; "but, nevertheless, I am right glad to see you here; and I trust you, sir," he continued, speaking to Algernon, "will understand the motives on which I have acted towards you, and, in your generous nature, will forgive and forget any pain I may have felt myself called upon to inflict."

"Entirely, sir," replied the young Englishman; "and I do assure your Highness, that I come to take my leave of you with a heart free from all rancour towards any one in your court."

"Ere I receive your farewell, sir," replied Frederic, "I will beseech you kindly to pass into the Queen's chamber, on the left, where your own fair Princess may have something to say to you;" and he pointed with his hand to the door which has been mentioned.

Algernon Grey bowed and walked on, followed by Lovet, who whispered, ere they reached the reception-room of the Princess, "You hear!

she is queening it already. Mind that you give her, the Majesty."

The next moment they had the whole scene of Elizabeth's saloon before them ; and, although it would seem that there had been a certain degree of preparation, to produce a greater effect, yet assuredly there was enough to move even cold hearts to enthusiasm. There sat the young Princess of England, still in the first freshness of early life, without one charm impaired, one grace lost. Her eyes were lighted up with the fire of enterprise and courage—her lip smiling with warm hopes—her whole form breathing energy and courage. Even in the hand, which—stretched forth on the small table before her—grasped a roll of papers, might be seen the firm, unconquerable, yet mild, spirit within. Around and behind her stood a number of the ladies of her court,—all beautiful, all radiant with the same enthusiastic light which beamed in their sovereign's face. Scattered through the room, with one or two a little advanced, and one close to the table at which the

Electress sat, were all the first men of the Palatinate, young and old : some with white hair, and faces scarred and seamed ; some in the prime of vigorous manhood ; some with the faintly traced moustaches, showing the first step of adolescence ; and, mixed with these, were nobles and princes from several other lands, ready to peril life and fortune for the fair being before them.

The buzz of conversation spread around ; gay smiles were on every face, the expectation of grand events in every breast ; and the rich crimson hangings of the room, the gay dresses, the gold, the varied hues, the lace and jewel sparkling in the sun, rendered the scene, to the eye, as bright and impressive as a knowledge of the occasion, and anticipation of the results of that meeting, made it matter of deep interest to the thoughtful mind and feeling heart.

Algernon Grey paused for a few minutes near the door, gazing over the various groups, and meditating upon all he saw, while the Princess spoke in a low tone with the gentleman at the

table. He was a fine looking old man, with a keen eye and a powerfully built frame; and, ever and anon, he bowed his head with a grave smile, and answered something in the affirmative to what the Electress said.

At length the young Englishman saw her eye rest upon himself and Lovet; and as soon as her conversation with the other seemed brought to a close, he was about to step forward, when Elizabeth raised her voice, and, looking round, said loud, in a peculiarly clear and silvery voice, "Princes and noble gentlemen, you have heard from my lord and husband the decision he has come to on the petition of the wronged Bohemian states, that he will take upon him the crown of that country, of which his own acts have deprived Ferdinand of Grätz, now emperor. I have no voice to tell the many mighty reasons which induced him, without aught of personal ambition, to accede to the wishes of a brave and indomitable nation, who sought in him both a ruler and a defender. Nor do I think it needful that I should. I will only ask, who would

refuse the task? Who would reject the cry of the oppressed? Who would not become the defender of a brave nation struggling merely for its just rights? However, it is not to be denied that there are difficulties and dangers in the way, that mighty powers are opposed to us, that every effort of the oppressor, that every means which subtlety and despotism can employ, will be used to frustrate the efforts made for the maintenance of the privileges of the German princes, for the establishment of religious and political freedom amongst the members of this great confederation. I speak of these things as a woman; and, doubtless, my husband has explained them to you as a man. He has asked your aid, and, if need should be, your swords to support him, and, in supporting him, the freedom of the whole Germanic empire, princes and people alike, in maintaining the rights of every class, and freedom of faith, as the birth-right of our citizens. I appeal to you as a woman; I can use no such strong arguments; I ask you, who will support with counsel

and in arms Elizabeth Stuart? On your chivalry, on your gallantry, on your devotion I rely. I will found my throne upon the swords of such as those who now surround me; and if the hands that bear those swords be willing, as I believe they are, that banner has not yet been raised upon earth which can prevail against them."

She spoke eagerly, warmly, but without effort. It seemed as if the words sprang from the heart to the lips, born of the feelings, and uttered without thought. Her cheek glowed; her lip trembled with emotion; her eye flashed; and, when in the end it became dim with glittering dew, as the last sounds vibrated on the ear, an enthusiastic murmur burst from the crowd, and almost every one took a step forward to express his devotion to her cause.

There was one, however, who was before the rest, a strong and gallant looking man, of seven or eight-and-twenty years of age, whose hair and beard, notwithstanding his youth, showed here and there a line of grey.

“Who is that?” asked Algernon, speaking to a gentleman near, as the other advanced straight towards the table.

“That is Christian of Anhalt; Christian, the younger; his father stands there behind—what is he about to do?”

“Madam,” said Christian of Anhalt, bending low, “I will beseech your Majesty for a glove.”

With a look of some surprise Elizabeth drew the glove from her hand, and gave it to him.

Deliberately, but quickly, he fastened it beneath the jewelled clasp which held the feather in his hat; and, pointing to it with a proud smile, exclaimed,—“In court, and camp, and battle-field, I will bear this token of my service to your Majesty, till death lays my head beneath the turf—so help me, God!”

Craven, who had stood near, merely touched the hilt of his sword with his finger, and said, “Madam, this is yours, and with it my whole heart.”

“And ours, and ours, and ours,” cried a

number of voices round, in every tone of enthusiasm.

Elizabeth spread forth her hands, as if overcome by the burst of energetic love which her words had called forth; and then, pressing her fingers on her eyes for a moment, remained silent. The next instant she raised her head, showing the traces of tears.

"Thanks, thanks!" she cried; "I now am well assured. Yet will I not spare one noble cavalier, who has a gallant heart to fight for a lady's service; for they can wield swords in case of need; and we shall have to think of marching armies and rude shocks of war, where men are in their place. From these, and worse than these, if need may be, I will not shrink myself; but, by my husband's side, will encounter weal or woe until the last. Ladies, however, I will dispense with, as much as possible; for I have no right to take them from their softer duties, to share those tasks fate has allotted me. The Countess of Löwen-

stein has her husband's good leave to follow him to war, as war will be perchance, and my sweet friend Amelia of Solms follows me for my love. Though my train will thus be small, yet, with such princely nobles round me, I shall want no kind tendance; and, as friends and brothers, in them will I put my trust, in them my highest hope. On Saturday next, our departure will take place. I beseech all, who can prepare in time, to be ready then, and all others to follow. Methinks, I am very nearly sure of all my husband's countrymen. I see several of my own present. One has at once promised me his aid. What say the others?—Will you not go, my lord?" and she fixed her eyes directly upon Algernon Grey; "will you not support Elizabeth Stuart, with a still young, but often tried sword? Will you not follow her, where great deeds are to be done?"

"I say, like my friend Craven, madam," answered Algernon Grey, lightly touching the hilt of his weapon; "this is your Majesty's,

and with it my whole heart. I go with you, of course; for it shall never be said that honour called me, and I refused to follow."

"And you, sir?" continued Elizabeth, turning to Lovet; "we know your reputation; you are a knight, brave, skilful, though fanciful, we have heard. What says your fancy to our expedition?"

"Why, may it please your Majesty," answered Lovet, with a smile, "my fancy, like a young and feeble child, is in leading-strings to my noble cousin here. We have a compact that will not let us separate, like a leash between two greyhounds. Henceforth, the noose of the leash is in your hands. You may slip us at any prey you will; and I warrant that we dash forward as far, or farther, than the rest. I could have wished a few things altered, it is true; when, methinks, the state of Bohemia, and your Majesty's prospects, would be both much improved."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Elizabeth; "what may they be?"

“Why, first, and as the principal,—for the others are not worth naming,”—Lovet answered, “more women in your Majesty’s court. Depend upon it, bright eyes are great inducements to great deeds—a soft sort of whetstones for sharp swords, but yet they are so; and, besides, you do not consider the unanimity which a number of ladies give to any counsels.”

“Methinks, you are jesting,” answered the Princess; “at all events, slanderous men have said that ladies bring rather discord than unanimity.”

“Discord amongst themselves,” said Lovet; “but, if there be enough of them, unanimity amongst men. It all depends upon the numbers. With only two in your whole court, and some five or six hundred gentlemen, all in love with them together, as in duty we are bound to be, the wind of our sighs will toss about your banners in a strange fashion, even if we do not turn our swords against each other’s throats, in order to reduce our numbers to the number of the fair. I do beseech your Highness, supply

us somewhat more bountifully with objects of adoration. I frankly confess I am an idolater, and must have my share of gods and goddesses."

"Well, well," replied Elizabeth, "that is a fault that may be amended. Is there aught else you would cavil at, Sir William?"

"Nought, madam," answered the Englishman, "unless it be that I do believe you will have so many gallant hearts all armed in your defence, that the task will be too easy, and each man's mite of honour not worth the having."

"There is a quality in glory," replied the English Princess, "that expands it to embrace all who truly seek it. It is the heart and will to do great deeds that truly merit honour. It were a poor and pitiful thing, indeed, if it could fall down at opportunity. The world may praise the fortunate man; even princes may raise, and courts may applaud; but true honour is the diamond which, though only admired when brought forth and cut, is of as high value even in the dark mine as on an emperor's crown.

Fortunate or unfortunate, with opportunity or none, the man who, with a brave heart, arms himself in this our righteous cause, shall still have glory for his meed ; and times to come, when his name is written, be it in tale or history, or the mere record of the family-book, shall add, as a mark of ever-living honour, ‘ He was one of those who drew the sword for Frederic of Bohemia, and Elizabeth, his queen ; he was one of those who fought for a nation’s freedom from oppression ; he was one of those who aided to establish right against wrong, and to set men’s hearts and consciences at liberty.’ ”

Elizabeth paused, with the marks of strong and enthusiastic emotions visible upon her countenance, and a murmur of applause ran through the assembled nobles, while one turned to the other ; and, though perhaps each might use a different mode of expression, there can be little or no doubt that but one sentiment found utterance,—“ Who would not fight for such a being as that ? ”

After a brief silence, the Electress resumed :

—“ A thousand thanks, noble gentlemen, to all of you. Had there been a doubt or misgiving in my heart, your words would have removed it; and now I will beseech you, as you go hence, speak once more with my noble husband, and give him, or rather his master of the horse, your names, and the number of followers you will bring with you: not that we may count our strength, for we have no apprehensions, but that lodging and provision for our train may be fully provided by the way: Farewell! And once more thanks! deep, heartfelt thanks!” Thus saying, she rose and retired through the door behind her, followed by her ladies.

Slowly, and conversing as they went, the gentlemen there assembled returned to the hall, where they had left the Elector and his court; and each, passing before him, spoke to him a moment in turn. When at length Algernon Grey approached, the Elector addressed him with a smile, as if quite sure that his purpose had been changed.

“Well, sir,” he said, “are you still determined to bid us farewell?”

“For a brief space, your Highness,” replied Algernon Grey. “I understand you do not take your departure till Saturday next.”

“Not till Saturday week next,” said the Elector; “but I hope then you will bear me company; for my fair wife, who reckons much upon her eloquence, counted fully on winning you to our cause.”

“I will go with your Majesty,” replied Algernon Grey; “and will but take my leave for a short time, in order that I may make preparation for serving you more effectually. I have with me but a few servants now; but I think, ere long, I may be enabled to swell your force with a small troop of followers not inexperienced in the trade of war. Some have served with me in this Venetian business; and though they returned to England, when there was no longer employment for their swords, yet they will gladly join me again in such a cause as this.”

“ But if you go back to your own land, you can never be here in time,” said the Elector. “ Remember, there is but ten days.”

“ England will not see me for many a year, my lord,” answered Algernon Grey ; “ but I can make my arrangements better elsewhere than here. I will be ready to accompany your Majesty on the day named. My followers can join me at Prague ; and though you may not see me till the very day, do not doubt of my coming, I beseech you.”

“ I will not,” said the Elector, earnestly ; “ I will not. When such a man has given his word, it is better than the bond of other people. How many men, think you, will you have with you ? We will have food and lodging ready for them all.”

“ Not so, your Majesty,” replied Algernon Grey ; “ I defray my own followers, wherever I be. Lodging, indeed, it may be necessary to find ; for the peasantry of the country—ay, and the citizens of the town, have a grand objection, it would seem, to receive strangers in their

houses, especially if they be soldiers ; and therefore, in this, perhaps, your Majesty's officers must interfere, otherwise it may be difficult to find quarters at once. The number, however, will be about from forty to fifty. Their arms, their clothing, and their food, must be my affair ; the rest your Majesty shall provide."

" Leaving little but thanks to furnish," answered Frederic. " However, be it as you will, my noble friend ; I am neither poor enough, nor wealthy enough, to take so generous an offer amiss. Farewell for the present ; and if you should want aid in any case, two words to our chancellor will be enough to bring it."

CHAPTER IX.

THE next ten days in the world's history are like those minutes of the night, where the hour strikes just as the eyes are closed to sleep, and a period passes by unnoted, except by those who dream. There are many such pauses in all annals, where no event marks the passing time on the recording page ; and yet how full of interest to many are these unstoried lapses in the march of time. How many gay scenes, how many sad ones, how much of comedy, how much of tragedy, have been enacted in the days not chronicled ? How many events have taken place in narrow domestic circles, which, spreading wider in their influences, like the ripples round a stone cast into a clear lake, have

carried, almost imperceptibly, the floating fragments of great things to the shore of fate ?

I have said that these ten days passed over unnoted, except by those who dream ; but one of those was Algernon Grey, who, at the small town of Mannheim, passed the intervening space between his leave-taking of the king of Bohemia, and his return to Heidelberg, busied, to say the truth, more with deep thoughts than important arrangements. His letters were soon written, his courier soon despatched, and all those measures taken which were necessary to call a lordly following to accompany him on his expedition, and to insure rapid supplies of money to meet even more than his own probable expenses. The rest of his time was given up to meditation ; for he had left Lovet at Heidelberg, agreeing at once that the short distance which separated them could be considered no infringement of the engagement into which they had entered.

Close rooms in narrow inns have neither a very wholesome nor a very pleasant character. Such as the small fortress, that Mannheim was

in those days, could alone afford, offered no great inducement to remain within doors ; and the greater part of Algernon's time was spent in wandering by the glistening waters of the Rhine ; and, while the current hurried rapidly by, in drawing images of life and human fate from the bright ripples, as they danced and fled beneath his eye. However those images might arise, the train still led him on to the place which he had lately left, and to one fair dream-like form which rose before him as a remembered vision of delight. All that had taken place immediately before that hour, all the joys and sorrows he had known, would have been but as phantasms, had not still enduring and immortal passion stamped the whole with the mark of reality, and told him that the bitterness was true, and only the dream of happiness that was false.

Few scenes could have been worse chosen to chase such sombre thoughts, to wake him from those dreams of the heart which he believed he had indulged too long. The merry crowd, the gay, enlivening multitude, the ever shifting scenes of busy life might have led on thought

after thought to occupy each hour, and banish vain regrets. The grander scenes of nature, the towering mountain, the deep valley, the profound, dark lake, the tempest and the storm, the forest, with its solemn glades and innumerable trees, might well have possessed him, even though it were at first but in part, with other images, and weaned him, if I may so call it, from the engrossing topic which now mastered all his mind. But that calm, grand river, flowing on in its meditative majesty, with sunshine and brightness on its peaceful waters, and none to break, even for a moment, the monotony of solitude, seemed to counsel thoughts of peace, and joy, and love, and spread, like a charm, over the young wanderer the powerful, passionate calmness in which it itself flows on. Agnes Herbert, she whom he loved beyond all power of forgetfulness, was ever present to his heart and mind. He thought of her in her sparkling beauty, as he at first beheld her, in scenes of revelry and joy: he thought of her in agony and helplessness, as he had seen her in the whirling waters of the dark Neckar: he

thought of her in calm serenity and high-minded meditation, as they had wandered together over the moonlight terraces, amidst gardens, and woods, and flowers. And he loved her, oh, how he loved her! How his heart yearned, how his bosom panted to return and press her in his arms; but that a dark and irrevocable barrier stood between, and mocked the eager longing of his love.

The common things of life seemed nothing to him; the ordinary events of the day, the meal-time and the sleeping hour, scarcely broke the lapse of the long, only dream. It was ever, ever Agnes, that was present; and when his eyes, worn down by weariness, were closed to waking things, she came upon the wings of the night, and visited his spirit in his sleep. He felt—he could not but feel—that to his peace, at least, her presence was less dangerous than her absence.

Thus passed day after day, till the last of his sojourn at Mannheim came; and then, to his surprise, by a boat towed up the Rhine, some eight or ten of his old followers, whom he expected not

for weeks, presented themselves at the landing-place. His messenger had proved speedy and intelligent; and all those whom he had found in London, he had urged to hurry into Germany without delay.

The activity of preparation which followed, gave some relief to their young lord's mind; and on the same night he set out to return to Heidelberg, at which place he arrived some two hours after dark, taking his way direct to the inn where he had formerly lodged, and where he had left his cousin.

The town, as he passed through, showed a gay and animated scene; for whatever portion of monotony had existed therein, while the streets presented nothing but their usual population of citizens and students, was now removed by the appearance of numerous parties of military retainers, whose arms here and there caught the light, as they passed by the unclosed windows, from which the beams of taper or lamp were streaming forth. All those inventions which give to our streets of the present times, a light little less powerful than that of

day, were then unknown. No gas displayed the face of house after house in long perspective; no lamp at every corner of the street showed the wanderer his way; no lantern, even, swung across with awkward chains, afforded a dim light to horseman or driver, as he paced slowly along in the midst of the tall and narrow streets. But, nevertheless, every here and there a faint beam, straying through the dull small pane of greenish glass in some still uncurtained casement, fell upon the gay, laced cloak, or brilliant cuirass, which appeared for an instant in the midst of some military party, and was then lost again the moment after, bequeathing the light to the wearer's successor in the ranks.

Round the door of the Golden Stag a great number of persons of different classes were assembled; and some of them seemed to be engaged in the pleasant occupation of wrangling with the host, or his servants, in regard to accommodation for the night. No vain and ridiculous attempt had been made at that time to regulate the ordinary dealings of one man with

another, by the incessant intervention of the police, which at all times aggravates the confusion which men pretend it is established to diminish. The interests of each individual were left to adjust themselves with those of others by the natural course, with this safeguard, that justice was always to be obtained promptly when injustice or wrong was committed ; but there was no endeavour to make men walk in a straight line, if they liked a crooked one, provided that crooked line did not trespass upon the comfort or rights of any one else. A few disputes might, and did occur, as was the case at the door of the Golden Stag ; but they very soon came to an end ; for, knowing that the innkeeper was as much the lord of his own inn as the baron of his own castle, men satisfied themselves with grumbling, when they were told there was no room for them, and sought another lodging with the more haste, because accommodation seemed to be scarce.

As soon as the worthy host perceived Algenon Grey, however, he and his drawers bowed down to the ground. The young gentleman was

assured that his old apartments, according to his orders, were kept quite ready for him; and, although his entertainer viewed the numbers of his swollen train with some degree of apprehension, yet great care was taken to say nothing before the crowd, which could give any disappointed gentleman cause to suppose that such a party was received without previous notice of its numbers.

When the horses had been delivered over to the care of hostlers and horse-boys, under the superintendence of the young Englishman's servants, and Algernon Grey and his host were ascending towards the rooms above, then poured forth the difficulties. Where he was to put the train; how he was to accommodate them; what room he could find for so many; where he was to get beds even of an inferior description, were mighty puzzling questions for the worthy landlord, with his house quite full. Nevertheless, all was at length arranged. The ante-chamber was filled with truckle-beds and mattresses on the floor; the room by the side of Algernon's own bed-room

received five of his companions ; and two more obtained lodging in the rooms previously appropriated to his servants.

This being all arranged, he descended to the public hall, where Lovet, he was informed, was profoundly engaged with his supper. He found him surrounded by half a dozen German gentlemen, with whom he had made acquaintance, eking out very good French, of which they could understand a part, with very bad German, of which they understood not quite so much. They comprehended, however, that he was laughing at everything and everybody—himself amongst the rest—and, smoothing their beards, and curling up their moustaches, they seemed to derive a considerable portion of grave amusement from his merriment, which, to say the truth, directed several shafts among themselves, although they were utterly insensible of the point.

“ Ah, Algernon ! ” exclaimed Lovet, starting up and laying down his knife ; “ I thought you were as treacherous as a Chloe, and had vanished from my sight with some swan of

the Rhine. Welcome back to Heidelberg; but have you heard the news?"

"No," answered Algernon Grey; "are there any changes?"

"No," answered Lovet, "none that I have heard of. The Elector and his party, numbering, with ourselves, some six hundred horse, set out to-morrow a quarter of an hour after daybreak. The Electress follows somewhat later with a body of chosen cavaliers to guard and accompany her. All the world is so full of enthusiasm, that if any man were to say 'Come with me and conquer Turkey, let us sack Hungary, or pillage Russia,' they would all go without asking whether the way lay either north or south. Good faith! I am as enthusiastic as the rest; and, like one of a flock of sheep in a dark night, I am all agog to jostle shoulders with my fat companions on whatsoever road the great bell-wether leads."

"And what road is that to be?" asked Algernon Grey.

"Heaven only knows!" exclaimed Lovet, sitting down to the table again; "I have asked

no questions. All I know is, that we make straight for a place with an inconceivable name, something like Waldsaxon, a town in the upper Palatinate. I sent on all your spare horses, as they arrived, together with three or four I had purchased for myself, telling the grooms to find the road the best way they could, and so they are probably now in the heart of Austria."

"Nonsense, nonsense, Lovet," cried his cousin; "where have the men gone to? If we are to make a rapid march, as doubtless will be the case, we must have the means of remounting; and a mistake would be no jest."

"Assuredly not," answered Lovet; "and, as I have scarcely time to finish my supper, before soft devotion calls me hence, sit down and take some food, and I will tell you, most noble cousin—— Here, bring platters and knives, fellows; more wine, more meat, more everything——Well, cousin mine, looking on a fair picture of the country, I sent the men on half way to a place called Altdorf, bidding them there wait for our coming, and take especial care to get themselves dead-drunk, if it were possible,

for the three consecutive days after their arrival. You will mark the policy, wise Algernon; for, as a man must get drunk sometimes, and always will get drunk in his master's absence, it was much better that they should do it by command than in disobedience; and, fixing on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday for the operation, I left them Friday for lassitude, and Saturday for refreshment; so that, by the time we arrive, they will be as brisk as larks, and the horses, if they have got drunk, likewise.—This partridge, stewed with sour cabbage, is the only excellent thing I have found in Germany—with one exception, cousin Algernon, with one exception. I beseech you, take a wing thereof; for I would fain share with you as far as possible; and of the other good, which fortune sends me, I cannot even spare a sigh—much less a merry-thought.—What will you have in the way of wine? Here is Burgundy, for which I sent a man express into the heart of France; and here is the juice of the Rhinegau, with some drops from the bishop of Bamberg's cellar, of which he was plundered

when last the quarrelsome men of this country fought about they knew not what."

Algernon Grey sat down, and, after musing for a minute or two, joined his companion in his meal. The conversation went on in the same tone in which it had begun: Lovet evading, under cover of his habitual jesting replies, any direct answer to unpleasant questions. Upon some points, however, Algernon Grey pressed him hard, asking if the Electress had made any change in her arrangements; and, when he said, laughing, "I am not one of her counsel, cousin mine," pursuing the inquiry by demanding, "Has she made any that you know of, William?"

"Oh, a hundred," answered Lovet; "she goes in a carriage instead of on horseback, they tell me: her gown is to be green instead of pink—but, good faith! I must away. I shall see you, doubtless, ere you go to sleep, though strong repose to-night will be needful; for we shall have busy days before us; and, if the devil has not grown old and lazy, there is work ready carved out to occupy every minute of the next two

years. What a happy thing it is, Algernon, that there is a devil; were it not for him the waters of the world would stagnate and get all over duck-weed, like a standing pool. Nay, do not look grave, grim cousin! Adieu! adieu!" and away he went, leaving Algernon Grey to make his arrangements for the following morning as best he could.

Habituated, however, as the young Englishman had been from his very boyhood to command and direct, no great difficulties attended his course. He found that the principal court of the castle was appointed for the assembling of all gentlemen of noble birth, who were to accompany the Elector towards Prague; and that all who brought military retainers to his aid were to direct their followers to meet in the market-place, and to join the royal party in order, as it descended from the palace. All his commands were soon given. Three of his servants were, by this time, well acquainted with the town of Heidelberg. Everything was prepared over night; and, after waiting for the

return of his cousin till the clock had struck eleven, Algernon Grey retired to rest.

He had ordered himself to be called at half-past five on the following morning; but, somewhat before that hour, picking his way through the beds in the ante-chamber, Lovet knocked hard at his door, shouting, "Up, Algernon, up! The people are swarming to the castle like bees to a hive. Let us go with them, or we may get stung;" and away he went again to finish his own preparations. In about three quarters of an hour more, the two cousins were riding up the hill, followed only by the servants necessary to hold their horses; and, passing a number of gentlemen not so well mounted as themselves, they reached the gates, where their names were demanded and compared with a list in the porter's hands. On giving those which they had assumed, instant admission was afforded to the two gentlemen themselves; their servants and horses being left with a crowd of others without. In the court some forty or fifty persons were found assembled; and, assuredly, no want

of enthusiastic hope appeared amongst them. All were cheerful, all were full of busy activity; each man encouraged his neighbour, each man strove to excite in others the same glad expectations that were sporting wildly in his own bosom.

Lovet seemed, during his cousin's absence, to have made a very general acquaintance amongst the principal personages of the electoral court. Hardly a face presented itself in the grey light of the early morning, of which he did not seem to have some knowledge; and to every third or fourth man he spoke, or gave some sign of recognition. He appeared indeed to have become extremely popular; his jests, whether delivered in exceedingly bad German, or good French, were laughed at and enjoyed; and, as the two cousins passed on, it was evident, as so frequently occurs in life, that the worthy and the highminded was regarded with cold doubt; while the one certainly the least estimable was met with pleasure and regard. It must not be denied that Algernon Grey in some degree felt this difference: not very painfully, it is true; but

still he thought, "This is, in some degree, my own fault. I have suffered circumstances with which the world has nothing to do to affect my demeanour to the world,—I must change this and be myself again. The time was when I could be as gay as Lovet, though in a different way. I will see whether those days cannot return."

As he thus thought, he saw the powerful form of the Baron of Oberntraut crossing the courtyard towards them; and, instantly advancing to meet him, he grasped him warmly by the hand.

"Ah, my good friend," said the young Englishman, "I rejoice to see you well enough to ride with us."

But Oberntraut shook his head: "Alas!" he said, "I am not to be one of the party. It is judged dangerous for me to undertake so long a journey; and, if I am not summoned to Bohemia, it would seem the intention of my Prince to confer upon me a charge here, honourable but somewhat inactive, I fear; and yet, when I consider what is likely, what dark clouds are

gathering in the horizon, and what the policy, though not the honour, of the Catholic league may induce them to do, I think I may find work for myself yet. Nevertheless I envy you, who are going at once to busy scenes, and trust I shall be permitted to follow soon ; but still, before you set out, let me make you known to one or two of those you may most esteem amongst your companions. Follow me for a moment ; there stands Christian of Anhalt, and with him one or two others of the best."

The young baron's tone had, as the reader may have perceived, undergone a complete change. The quick and fiery spirit, the daring and energetic character, remained unaltered, as the whole of the rest of his life proved ; but the first check he had received in life had worked most beneficially in subduing the arrogance which had been generated by long-continued success and a sense of superiority to most of those around him. With a generous heart and an intelligent mind, he felt, even towards Algernon Grey himself, very different sensations from those which any ordinary man would have

experienced. He entertained something like a sense of gratitude towards him for the better sensations which he had been the means of producing; and he felt a noble anxiety to show, that so far from regarding the young Englishman's conduct with any lingering rancour, he looked upon it rather with admiration and respect.

Following him across the court-yard, Algernon was soon introduced to several of the most distinguished of the friends of the young king of Bohemia; but, while speaking with the elder prince of Anhalt, a voice from the steps summoned two or three of the principal noblemen, by name, to the presence of the Elector; and, in a few minutes after, the same tongue called upon Master Algernon Grey, and several other foreign gentlemen, to present themselves for a moment.

Conversing with his friend Craven, Algernon was conducted to one of the great halls in the building of Otho Henry, where, in the midst of much bustle and some confusion, he found Frederic the Fifth booted and spurred for his departure, with a number of gentlemen stand-

ing round, and the Electress-Mother, with one or two ladies of the court, at a little distance. Elizabeth of England was not present; and over the group around Louisa Juliana, the young Englishman's eye roamed in vain, seeking the form of Agnes Herbert. At that parting moment his heart longed for a few words more, for one last sight of that fair face, for the sound, if but for an instant, of that melodious voice.

As he approached, Frederic was turning as if to speak with his mother, but, his eye lighting upon Lord Craven and the rest, he paused to speak with them, separately, for a moment or two. His principal object in calling them to his presence seemed but to conciliate regard by an act of courtesy; and to each he had something kind and graceful to say, with that winning manner which is always powerful to obtain regard, but not always to command obedience.

"Ah, my unknown friend," he said, when Algernon's turn came, "I was sure you would not fail me; and, when I heard of your arrival last night, it gave me great pleasure, but no sur-

prise. What men can you count upon from England?"

"I have only fifteen with me at present, sir," answered Algernon Grey; "but I think I can promise that the number in Prague, ere a month, will be fifty; and those not only men fit to bear arms, but to train others should need be; for they have been taught in a good school, and practised in some sharp encounters."

"Thanks, thanks," replied the king of Bohemia; "that is a most serviceable addition to our force—wait and we will go down with you. You will ride near us, that we may have some conversation with you as we go."

He then turned to his mother, and, taking her in his arms, embraced her with every mark of strong affection. "Farewell, my dearest mother!" he said, while the tears rose in his eyes: "God protect you and me! Under Him, it is to you I look for the safety of this fair land I am leaving."

The Electress did not reply, but held her son warmly to her heart, and then, wringing his

hand hard, pressed her overflowing eyes upon his shoulder. After a few moments, Frederic gently disengaged himself and took a step away—turned for another embrace—and then, bursting from her, strode across the hall, followed by the crowd of gentlemen around.

The Electress gazed after him with a sad and solemn look, then clasped her hands without lifting her bended head, and exclaimed, "There goes the Palatinate into Bohemia."

The Elector paused not to listen, for he felt his emotions overpowering him; and, doubtless, the sound of many feet drowned the words ere they reached his ears. As soon as he appeared in the court, a shout, not like an English cheer, but sufficiently expressive of gratulation, welcomed his approach; and a number of voices exclaimed, "Long live Frederic, King of Bohemia."

The Elector raised his plumed hat and bowed, exclaiming the next moment,—“To horse, gentlemen, to horse! There are too many sweet ties and dear memories here. We

must break away ;” and, crossing the court on foot, he passed for the last time through the deep archway of his hereditary castle, followed by the crowd of noble and enthusiastic gentlemen who had assembled to accompany him. Beyond the gate tower he sprang upon the back of a magnificent horse, which two grooms, running in haste, led up to the farther side of the drawbridge.

His followers hurried to mount ; and, in a moment after, the cavalcade was descending the hill. The fresh and fiery chargers were eager to dash on ; some reared and plunged ; some pulled hard at the rein ; but, strange to say, the horse of the young King, though unquestionably the finest and most powerful animal of the whole group, full of life, vigour, and activity, stumbled at the first step and well nigh fell. Never, even in the augury-loving days of the old Romans, was there a time when omens of any kind were more eagerly watched, or produced a deeper impression on the minds of men ; and it was easy to see a grave and distressed look spread over the countenances of

many of the young monarch's followers, as they marked this untoward accident.

"That is unfortunate," said the younger Christian of Anhalt, who was riding near Algernon Grey.

"Nay, rather fortunate that the horse did not fall," replied the Englishman; "but do you really put any faith in such indications?"

"Not I," answered the Prince; "but omens often make misfortunes, though they don't predict them. The courage of half a score amongst us is already cooled by that horse's stumble; and I have heard of a battle lost by the first look of a comet's tail. Heaven send us no more such auguries, or we shall reach Prague with cold hearts."

"Mine is cold enough already," answered Algernon Grey, who had determined, during the expedition before him, to throw away the reserve which had so long overshadowed him, and cultivate, by frankness, the regard of those who were to be his companions for many months; "mine is cold enough already, though,

Heaven knows, not cold in the cause of your noble Prince."

"Ay, and what has chilled it?" asked Christian of Anhalt.

"Many things," answered Algernon Grey, with a faint smile; "some treachery, some disappointment, some burdensome bonds, formed by good, misjudging friends, which can neither be broken nor shaken off."

"A bad case," answered Christian of Anhalt; "but, methinks, were I you, I would never suffer things that cannot be mended to weigh down my light free heart, but would rather throw them back upon fate's hands, and be merry in spite of fortune."

"A good philosophy," answered Algernon Grey; "and I am resolved to try it; but yet you may one day find it difficult to practise what you teach."

"Nay, not a whit," replied his companion. "We may learn philosophy even from the brute beasts; they sigh not over the morrow or the yesterday. It is only because we make curses of powers that were given for blessings,

and use our memory and our foresight, not for warning and precaution, but for regret and despair."

"Excellent good," cried Lovet, who was riding but a step behind. "The same doctrine I have been preaching to him for the last two months! Me he would never listen to; now he will be all docility; for a prophet is no prophet in his own country; and a cousin's counsels like the ale of the servant's hall, always taste pricked to the master of the house."

"There is some difference between your sage advice, William, and our noble comrade's," answered Algernon Grey.

"Not a bit," cried Lovet. "Enjoy the present; forget the past; let the future take care of itself. Such is the cream of the morality of each; and you only think otherwise because a stale pie tastes fresh upon a clean napkin—But here we are coming to the square—On my life, a mighty fine body of men, and in good order, too. There must have been a shrewd head to marshal them."

CHAPTER X.

THE morning was fair, but sultry; the pace at which the cavalcade proceeded was, for several miles, very quick; and the exhilarating effect of rapid motion would probably again have raised the spirits of all, had it not been for a certain oppressive feeling in the air, which rendered the application of the spur necessary, even to strong and high-blooded horses, at the end of five miles. Algernon Grey felt the influence of the atmosphere as much as any one. In vain he endeavoured to shake off the gloom which hung over him, to laugh and talk with those around, to give back to Lovet jest for jest; the thoughts which he wished to banish would return and struggle to possess him wholly. We all know we must all have felt the influence of particular states of the air, not

alone upon our corporeal frame, but also upon the very energies of the mind ; when, without losing in the slightest degree our power over the intellect, we cannot command that finer and more supple element in our complicated nature—whatever it be called—which gives birth to the feelings of the moment. Reason is vain against it ; resolution is useless ; we may govern the external display, but we cannot avoid the internal sensation ; and a lustrous brightness, or a dim cloud, spreads over every subject of contemplation from some hidden source of light and shadow within us. Who can say, “ I will be merry to-day ? ” The man who does so is a fool ; for not the brightest gifts of fortune, not the sunshine of all external things, not every effort of a strong determination, not the exercise of wit, wisdom, and philosophy, will enable him to succeed, unless the spirit of cheerfulness be in his own heart. He may say, indeed, “ I will be calm ; ” and many a man has been so, in the midst of intense sufferings—to the eye of the world. Many a man, perhaps, has been so even in his own opinion ;

but I much doubt whether some one of the many modifications of vanity was not, then, putting a cheat upon him.

With Algernon Grey the effort was vain ; he felt depressed, and he struggled against the depression ; but the enemy conquered, and, foot by foot, gained ground upon him. First, he gave way so far as to think of Agnes Herbert, to dwell upon the recollection of her beauty and her excellence. Then he strove to cast his eyes forward into the future, and to think only of the coming events ; but what a sad contrast did they present to the images just banished ! war, and strife, and the fiery turbulence of ambition, and the low, mean intrigues of courts, and cold pageantry, and idle reveling ; in place of beauty, and love, and hope, and sweet domestic peace ! It was too painful to rest upon ; and his mind turned to her he loved again ; but the same bright visions, in which he had indulged for a moment, would not now come back at his bidding. He thought of Agnes, it is true ; but at the same time he remembered that he was leaving her for ever ;

that he was voluntarily casting away the early joy of first love, the only refuge in which his heart could now find peace, the sweetest light that had ever dawned upon existence, all that imagination could have pictured of happiness and contentment. And deep, deep, to his very heart, he felt the sacrifice ; and his spirit writhed in the torture which he inflicted on himself.

“Should he really never see her more ?” he asked himself ; “ or should he see her again, but as the wife of another ?” There was agony and despair in the very thought ; and yet, what could he do ? how could he act to prevent it ? how could he shut out that terrible but too certain conviction ? It was impossible to change his hard fate. It was impossible even to dream that it would be changed ; and in the end he gave himself up to dull and heavy despondency.

His feelings had been grave and sad even when he came to Heidelberg. He had believed that he was destined to go through life unloving and unbeloved, linked to one whose reported conduct was, to say the least, light, whom he only remembered as a proud.

haughty child ; whom he only knew by the evil rumours which had reached him. But since that time a light had arisen on the darkness of such feelings, to go out as suddenly as it had been kindled, and leave the night tenfold more gloomy than before. He had learned to love, but without hope ; and what state can be more terrible to a young and passionate heart ?

On such things he pondered as they rode along ; and they soon absorbed his whole attention. He marked not with any degree of accuracy the road they took ; he hardly saw the houses, or the trees, or the mountains as they passed. He marked not the fleeting hours, or the changes of the light and sky. But there were others in the train whose eyes were more busily employed ; and amongst them were those of his own servants, who, with less to occupy their thoughts, felt, or seemed to feel, the fatigues of the way and the oppression of the sultry atmosphere far more than their lord.

“It is mighty hot, Tony,” said Frill, the page, wiping his brow with a delicate kerchief ; “and methinks the folks are riding exceed-

ingly fast, considering the sultriness of the temperature, and the capability of their quadrupeds."

"Ay, goodluck, it is hot," answered the servant; "but the quadrupeds, as you call them, Master Frill, can bear it quite as well as the two-legged beasts perched upon them. There thou art now thyself, mounted upon the tall roan, with thy red-heeled riding boots sticking out from under thy cloak, like a small Cornish crow upon the back of a big sheep; and losing much moisture from thy brow and temples, while the good beast has hardly turned a hair. Now, I will warrant thee, Frill, thou art thinking in a miserly spirit of the world of essences and perfumed soap it will cost to cleanse thee of all this dust; but I will console thee, Frill; I will relieve thy mind. Thy conscience shall be spared the small sin of pilfering odours out of our lord's saddle-bags."

"I have no need to pilfer, Tony," answered the boy; "I leave that to you. I have got all I want in my own saddle-bags, and ask nothing but a little fair water."

“That thou shalt have in abundance, Frill,” replied his companion; “and sooner, perchance, than thou thinkest; for, if yon great leaden cloud lie not, thou shalt have water enough within an hour as to spare thee all future washing for the day, and make thee forswear such liquids for a month to come.”

“It looks marvellous like it,” answered Frill, eyeing the heavens with a somewhat rueful look.

“Like it, but not marvellous, friend Frill,” answered Tony: “thunderstorms will come in most countries of the world; and rain will fall; and wind will blow; and grass will spring up with its universal evergreen; and pages will say flat things in pleasant tones, and think themselves mighty wise in their estate.”

“Do you judge it will thunder, Tony?” asked the youth, in a tone which made the older servant fancy he was somewhat apprehensive.

“Ay, that it will,” replied Tony; “it will thunder to your heart’s content. I should not wonder if we saw half a dozen of those gay

lords struck with the lightning. I have seldom seen so great a bellyful of thunderbolts as that one up there."

"If it do, Tony, there's a good creature, just catch the bridle of my horse; for I doubt if I have strength to hold him. Saw you not how he plunged and passaged just as we were setting out? I wrang my two arms nearly off to keep him in."

"Oh, I will put to a stronger arm in case of need," answered Tony. "I thought your horse and all would have been over into the valley, at which I should have rejoiced with sincere friendship as an honourable and distinguished death for one so young. But here I must take care that you do not die in a by-road, like a pilgrim's donkey, and so I'll stop your beast's capering if he should be riotous. But mark you, Master Frill, how our friend with the hawk's eyes is plying our lord, his cousin, with sweet talk. Now I will not give the value of a goose's egg for anything that he says; but yet be you certain, good friend Frill, that he says nothing without an object. It would

be worth something to know what that object is; for then one could watch his working for .”

“Can he be wishing to get our lord killed,” asked Frill, “if he puts him upon such expeditions as these?”

“Not so, master page,” answered Tony; “first, because he did not put him upon this expedition. I heard him arguing reasonably enough one day against his going.”

“Ay,” answered Frill; “but I saw a boy in the streets of Heidelberg driving a large old boar, and when he wanted him to go on, he pulled him back by a string round his hind leg.”

“A savoury comparison for our noble master,” said Tony; “but yet there may be some truth in it,” and, scratching his head with one finger thrust under his broad hat, he meditated for a moment or two. “No, no,” he continued at length, “he could gain nothing by it; that’s not his object. He is but his cousin by the side of the woman. The title dies with our lord, if he has no children; and the estates go to the Howards. It

would be worse for him, rather than better, if he died; for I know he borrows money from time to time. It can't be that, Master Frill."

"I'll tell you what, Tony," replied the boy, "I think you might get something from old Paul Watson, who joined us with the rest at Mannheim. He was bred up in the Lady Catherine's household, and Sir William is always down there, I hear."

"Get something from Paul Watson!" cried Tony. "Get juice out of a stone! Why, I do not believe he has ten words to give to any man; but I'll try, notwithstanding. He knows a good deal, I dare say, if he would but speak; for these silent fellows use their eyes, if not their tongues. —Let us ride up to him and see what he will say. On my life, I wish the storm would come down; for this heat is unbearable."

Thus saying, he pushed on his horse at the side of the cavalcade, till he reached the spot where a well-equipped body of armed men was moving along in the Elector's train. The difference of their accoutrements and the figures of their horses, combining great bone and

strength with agility, marked them out for English soldiers ; and, drawing in his rein by the side of a man, some fifty years of age, with grey hair and moustache, Tony commenced a conversation, saying, " Well, Paul, I have not seen you for more than nine months; how has it gone with you since ?"

" Well," answered the man, scarcely looking round.

" And what have you been about ever since ?" asked Tony.

" Many things," replied Paul Watson.

" You have been down at the Lady Catherine's, I hear," continued Tony, " in your old haunts, Master Watson. I dare say you enjoyed yourself mightily."

" Yes," answered his companion.

" Was Sir William down there then ?" continued Tony, with a careless manner.

Paul Watson nodded his head.

" I wonder what is his object in going about with our lord here, after letting him wander so many years by himself," said Tony, musingly.

" Don't know," replied Paul Watson.

“What was he about so long down there?” was Tony’s next question; and to this he got the only satisfactory answer he had yet received.

“Making love to the lady,” answered his companion, with a grin and a sort of gasp, as if the number of words, though they would be spoken, half choked him in the utterance.

“Oh, ho!” cried Tony, his eyes lighting up with intelligence; but he had no opportunity of inquiring farther; for one of the Elector’s officers, riding along the line, motioned him to fall back, saying, “Keep the order, keep the order!”

Tony obeyed; for although he might have liked to inquire farther, yet the man’s few words gave him the key to many a secret. Frill, who, notwithstanding a certain portion of page-like affectation, was a shrewd, clever youth, had remained in his place, thinking it much better that Tony should go on alone, trusting to obtain from him any information he might acquire by one means or another, after his return.

“I would not come with you, Tony,” he said;

“for if Paul will but speak little before one, he will speak nothing before two. What has he told you?”

“Little enough,” answered Tony; “but now take care of your beast, Master Frill; for here comes down the storm.”

A large heavy drop or two fell, as he spoke, spotting the dust upon their horses' coats; and, the next instant, a broad flash of lightning shot across the whole sky, changing the lurid mass of cloud, which by this time had crept up over the zenith, into one wide expanse of flame. At first the thunder followed slowly after the flash, leaving a long interval between; but, ere many minutes were over, the roar was almost incessant. The sky scarcely for an instant was free from lightning; the crash of the thunder, echoed from mountains to woods, was really terrific; and that storm, which accompanied Frederic on his way to claim the crown of Bohemia, is recorded by all annalists as the most tremendous that ever visited the Palatinate. To describe it is impossible; but we may comprehend what was its intensity, when we learn that men accustomed

to every kind of danger felt overawed by the strange and terrible phenomena they witnessed; and, to use the words of the chronicler, "thought that the end of the world had come." The fierce flame of the lightning half blinded both horses and men; the fierce livid streaks of fire shot incessantly down from the sky; and, darting amidst the forests, rent many of the strongest trees to atoms. Balls of flame passed hissing through the air, and exploded with a sound like the discharge of large ordnance; while the continued roll of the thunder deafened the ear; and every now and then a crash, as if mighty rocks had been cast down into an echoing vault, broke through the less intense sounds and seemed to shake the very earth. The rain, too, came down in torrents, now and then mingled with hail; but, far from mitigating the fury of the storm, it seemed only to aggravate its rage.

At first the horses plunged, and darted hither and thither, and a scene of indescribable confusion took place in the cavalcade; but, after a time, they seemed cowed into tranquillity, and,

with drooping heads and hanging ears, plodded on, while torrents of rain streamed off their coats.

For seven hours—from nine till four—the war of elements continued, without the slightest abatement; and then another hour was passed, with the thunder roaring at a greater distance, and the lightning streaming more faintly, after which succeeded dull heavy rain. Still, throughout the whole, the young King of Bohemia pursued his way; spurring on, wherever it was possible, as fast as the weary and discouraged horses would go. Once only he paused, in a small town, to take some refreshment and rest; but in three-quarters of an hour he was on the way again, and drew not a rein till just as night was falling, and a faint streak of yellow light was seen to the westward under the dull canopy of cloud. Just at that moment, some towers and steeples were seen, at the distance of about two miles; and Christian of Anhalt, pointing on as he rode by Algernon Grey, exclaimed, “Thank God! there is our resting-place. This has, indeed, all been very unfortunate.”

"It has, truly," answered the young Englishman; "and the more so, if you have formed a right judgment of the superstitious feelings of your countrymen."

"It is of that, alone, I speak," answered the Prince. "Who minds a heavy shower of rain, or a thunder-storm, as far as he is personally concerned? But yet half of the people here are already drawing evil prognostications from a stumbling horse and the usual result of a month of hot weather. When the priests and the ladies arrive, too, it will be worse; for, if men are too much given to superstition, women and clergymen know no end of it—always excepting our fair Queen, whose own high soul is her omen of success. I wonder where our quarters are marked out. You are in the same inn with me, I hear. My father lodges with the King, in the town-house. Where they are to put us all, in this small place, I know not—especially after the Queen and the rest have arrived."

"Does she come hither to-night?" asked Algernon Grey, in some surprise.

“Yes; but it will be late,” replied his companion. “She comes by the other road; it is further round, but less hilly, and relays of horses are prepared for her. Here! Herr von Alfeld,” he continued, addressing a gentleman who was riding by, “know you where my quarters lie?”

“One of the inns in the market-place,” replied the officer to whom he spoke, “is marked for you, the Lord Craven, and two other English gentlemen, with your trains. I will tell you the name;” and he looked at a paper in his hand, but the light was too faint to enable him to see; and, after a moment’s thought, he said, “It is the Star, excellent sir—I remember now; it is the Star, on the left hand of the market.”

He then rode on; and in a few minutes began the scene of hurry and confusion inevitably produced by the entrance of a large and long expected party into a small town, notwithstanding every precautionary measure to provide for their accommodation. The rain had just ceased; all the inhabitants were at their doors or windows; the innumerable signs which hung from

house to house across the narrow streets—for the most part crowned with garlands—shook showers of large drops upon all who passed below; boys and girls ran beside the horses, shouting and screaming; horse-boys and drawers rushed out of inns and taverns; torches and lanterns flashed here and there; and the young king's harbingers, who had been sent on the preceding day, coming forth to conduct the different parties to the quarters prepared for them, aided to banish everything like order from the cavalcade. Frederic himself, and the part of the train immediately attached to his person, of course found no difficulty; but all the other gentlemen dispersed, eagerly seeking their lodgings, and calling loudly to their men to follow; while every innkeeper who had a single chamber unappropriated strove to mislead some of the stragglers into his house, assuring them that there was the place engaged for them.

“Come on, Grey, with me,” said Christian of Anhalt, between whom and Algernon had

sprung up a feeling of friendship, which went on increasing to the end of their lives. "Call your men together, as they are strangers, and bid them follow close, with your cousin. My people can take care of themselves, as they have good broad German tongues in their heads. I can find my way to this Star, for I have been here before. The market-place is straight on, where the King is going."

Algernon's orders were soon given; Lovet rode up to his side, the servants and his little band of soldiers came close behind, pushing through the crowd with a quiet regularity which excited the admiration of the young Prince of Anhalt, and in a few minutes they were in the midst of the market-place, which was large and commodious considering the smallness of the town. The town-house was directly opposite, and innumerable lights were running along the front from window to window, showing that the Prince was already within; but as Christian of Anhalt was looking around to discover the sign of the Star, a man in a citizen's dress,

with a long grey beard, came up to the side of his horse, saying, "This way, Highness. Here are your quarters at my inn."

"What is it called?" asked the Prince. "Is it the Star?"

"No, sir, the Golden Cup," answered the landlord.

"That will not do, then," replied Christian: "ours is the Star. It must be there, Grey, on the right—come on;" and, without waiting for the remonstrances of the host of the Golden Cup, he pushed his horse forward, and soon saw a golden star hanging from the face of a large house covered all over with grotesque paintings in fresco.

"Now, noble lords, now, what is your pleasure?" asked the landlord, who was standing at his door with two serving-boys.

"Meat, drink, lodging, and a fire to dry our wet cloaks," answered Christian of Anhalt, springing from his horse, and walking into the passage, followed by Algernon Grey and Lovet.

"Meat, and drink, and fire, you shall have, noble gentlemen," replied the good man; "but

lodging I cannot give, for the whole house is taken by the king's harbingers for—"

"For us," added the young Prince, interrupting him, and entering a hall on the right, from which a cheerful blaze broke forth. "Quick, my good host, set what you can before us, and especially good wine; and send one of your boys to take care of our men without. Here, Grey, let us dry what Scultetus calls the outer man while they bring us something to warm the inner one. — What, in the devil's name, do you stand for, host? Do you want us to use cold iron that you stay gaping there?"

The host ran out alarmed, and, after a moment or two, some of the servants brought in several dishes of smoking viands, with three flasks of wine. But, as the party of travellers sat down, Algernon Grey, marking the scared looks of the attendants, whispered to the Prince, "I think there must be some mistake here. Are you sure that Herr von Alfeld is to be depended upon?"

"By my life, I know not," replied Christian of Anhalt; "but, right or wrong, I sup before I

move. Ho! drawer, where is your master? Send him here!"

"He is gone, noble sir, to seek one of the harbingers," replied the lad, in a humble tone: "he thinks there is some mistake."

"There can be no mistake about this stewed hare," cried Lovet, "unless it be a cat disguised, and even then it smells too savoury to be inquired into. Shall I help your Highness?"

"With all my heart," replied Christian of Anhalt: "cat or devil, I will eat it, if it be tender. Out with those corks, knaves! Now, success to our expedition, and long live Frederic, King of Bohemia! This inn is mighty quiet, it must be confessed. I thought to find the hall tenanted by a score. I fear we have got into some reserved chase, and are poaching upon a private larder; but no matter, so that hunger be satisfied and the wet kept out."

With such light talk passed away about half an hour, at the end of which time the landlord reappeared with a tall personage whom the Prince of Anhalt recognised as one of Frederic's atten-

dants ; and, saluting him with a gay laugh, he exclaimed, " Well, William of Waldhof, if we are in a wrong nest it is all Alfeld's fault : he told me that the Star was to be our quarters, as my English friend can witness."

" He mistook, noble sir," answered the other : " he should have said the Golden Cup. But it matters not, my prince, for the present. This inn is for the Queen's ladies, who cannot lodge in the town-house ; but they are not expected for some hours, so finish your supper, in Heaven's name, and then at your convenience betake yourself to the inn just opposite. I will go and see that all is ready for you, and put your men in possession ; for I passed, I think, some forty of them at the door."

" Thunder and devils !" cried Christian of Auhalt, turning to the host, " what left you them at the doors for ?"

" I had no place for them, your Highness," answered the man, in a humble tone ; and William of Waldhof stepping in to quiet the prince's anger, the latter sat down again to the table, from which he had started up, and recommenced

his meal with a degree of hunger which was not easily satisfied. Wine, and meat, and game disappeared with wonderful celerity ; for neither Lovet nor Algernon Grey had tasted anything since they left Heidelberg, and the distance was considerably more than fifty miles : a long journey, in those days of evil roads and tortuous paths. Christian of Anhalt drank deep, and Lovet did not fear to follow his example, for he loved the wine-cup, though, to say the truth, it had little effect upon him. On the young Prince it worked more potently : not that he got drunk ; for he could talk and reason sensibly enough ; and even his corporeal faculties, which usually give way sooner than the mental in men accustomed to deep potations, were not at all weakened. He crossed the room steadily, to fetch something that he wanted from a small pocket in his cloak ; and though he showed, towards the end of the meal, an inclination to fall asleep, yet by no other sign did he betray that he had been drinking. At length, however, as he finished the second bottle of strong old wine which had gone to his

own share, he rose, saying, "I must have a nap before I go farther. Any man who is awake, rouse me in an hour. If we all go to the land of dreams together, doubtless some one will come to turn us out when the ladies arrive. So, good night for the present;" and, lying down on a bench at the farther side of the hall, he was soon deep in slumber.

Had Algernon Grey given way to the strong temptation of drowning the memory of many cares in the sparkling juice, which but raises the spirits to depress them more terribly afterwards, he might perhaps have found the same thoughtless repose; but he had avoided the wine, as was his custom; and, after seeing the young Prince sinking to sleep, he turned to Lovet, saying, "We must see for these horses you sent on, William. Doubtless they will be needed early to-morrow. Know you where they are to be found?"

"Not I," answered William Lovet; "how could I tell the names of inns in a place which seems to consist of little else? I bade the German fellow you sent with them to do the best

he could for them ; and, on my life, I think you had better stay till we get to the other place, and then send out some of the men to hunt. Here is a bottle and a half of wine still to be drunk, and I shall take my share, lest we do not find anything so good where we are going."

"No, no," answered Algernon Grey ; " I like to be prepared. You stay and watch our young friend there, drinking the wine meanwhile ; and I will go and see what can be done to find the means of mounting us all to-morrow. My charger will not hold out much longer over such roads."

Thus saying, he turned and quitted the inn, leaving his cloak to dry before the great fire. Wandering out into the streets, he had, in about three-quarters of an hour, discovered the small public-house, with its long range of stabling, where his fresh horses had been put up ; and, giving what orders he thought necessary, he returned slowly towards the Star. The whole town was still full of bustle ; people passing about in all directions, torches and lanterns flitting from house to house ; and, as

Algernon Grey came forth from the door of the stables, he thought he heard a rolling sound, something like the beat of a distant drum. On approaching the town-house, however, he saw several large heavy carriages drawn up before it, a number of horses, and ten or fifteen servants busily unloading a quantity of luggage. Concluding at once that the Queen had arrived, he hurried into the Star, the passage of which was deserted, and, turning to the right, opened the door of the eating-hall, and went in.

The large room had now only one tenant, and that was a lady, who, standing with her back towards him, gazed into the fire, with her left hand leaning on his own cloak, cast over the tall back of a chair to dry. Algernon Grey's heart beat; for, although being wrapped up in mantles, and with a veil over the head, the lines of the figure were difficult to discern, yet there was something in the graceful attitude into which it had fallen, with the one small foot crossed over the other, and the hand resting so lightly on the chair for support that it seemed scarcely to touch it, which impressed him at

once with the certainty of who it was. At the first sound of his step in the room, Agnes turned round ; and, with irrepressible joy in his heart and in his face—joy against which reason had no power—her lover sprang forward and took her hand.

There was equal pleasure in the countenance of Agnes Herbert, and she thanked him with bright smiles for coming to see her so soon ; so that it was hard for Algernon to explain that he did not know she was to form one in the train of the young Queen ; but yet he did it.

“ I thought you must have known that long ago,” replied the lady. “ There was a doubt at one time whether I should accompany her or not ; and as my uncle expressed no wish for me to stay, the Electress mother urged me to go, and, of course, I could not refuse.”

“ It is fated,” thought Algernon Grey ; “ it is fated ! What use of struggling against such events ? I will do nought that I can regret or be ashamed of, but I will make myself miserable no more by a constant war with my own heart.”

He remained with Agnes for more than an hour—for half an hour nearly alone ; and, when the Countess of Loewenstein and two other ladies joined them, he still lingered, giving aid in all their arrangements, listening to the details—of which they were full—of the perils and discomforts of the way, and cheering them with gay and lively conversation full of hope and expectation for the future. Only one of the four ladies there present had ever spoken with him before ; but to her his present demeanour and conversation were altogether new and strange ; it was different from anything she had seen or heard in him before, but not less pleasing. Her mind required soothing and cheering ; it sought to revive hope and kindle expectation, but found within itself no resources to effect such an object ; and as with graceful ease and varied powers he painted the coming times in the brightest colours, and showed the future prospect on the fairest side, she listened, half convinced that her uncle's dark apprehensions were vain, and that, with such men as the one before her to aid, direct, and support a

noble and a holy cause, success could not fail to follow, and all would end in victory and peace.

At length, it was announced that the rooms above were ready ; for, with a somewhat national spirit of delay, but few preparations had been made, under the idea that the Queen would not arrive till midnight ; and Algernon Grey threw his cloak over his shoulder to depart, saying, " Rest must be very needful to you all, fair ladies ; for it must have been a weary journey to you."

" Far more tiresome to all of us," answered Agnes, " than if we had come on horseback, as we should have done some five or ten years ago. I hate these carriages for travelling ; they are well enough in a procession, or to go through a town ; but, for a road, I think the old way is best."

" Had we come in the old fashion," said the Countess of Loewenstein, " we should have been melted, like sugar-candy, with all the rain that has fallen."

“Heaven forbid !” cried Algernon Grey, laughing ; “for then there would have been a world of sweetness wasted on the high road ;” and, seeing them to the foot of the stairs, he retired, leaving no unfavourable impression upon the minds of all.

CHAPTER XI.

I MUST now, for one brief chapter, quit the course of narrative I have been hitherto pursuing, and, instead of detailing, day by day, the actions and feelings of the personages in whom I have endeavoured to interest the reader, give a short sketch of the events of one whole year, dwelling principally upon the facts of general history; but, in the end, endeavouring to sum up, in a very few words, all those changes which have taken place in the relative position of Algernon Grey and Agnes Herbert.

As is well known to every one acquainted with German history, Frederic, King of Bohemia, pursued his journey on horseback on the

following morning to the small town of Altdorf, riding but one horse from Heidelberg to that place;* thence he went to Amberg, and thence again to Waldsachsen, joined on the road by many friends, and met at the latter town, which was then the last of the Upper Palatinate, by the deputies of the States of Bohemia. At Waldsachsen and Amberg some days were passed; but at length, in the middle of October, the young King, with a train almost swelled to the amount of an army, crossed the Bohemian frontier, and entered the town of Egra. From Egra he was conducted in triumphal procession, amidst the shouts and gratulations of the people, the boisterous joy of the rude nobility of the realm, and the wild enthusiasm of the Protestant party, to the gates

* Some letters, from a person who pretended to be an eyewitness, state that Frederic accompanied the Queen and the rest of the court from Heidelberg to Amberg, in a train of eighteen carriages; but it is beyond all doubt that he, and the gentlemen who accompanied him, rode the whole way. The King himself performed the journey to Altdorf, near two hundred miles, on one horse; there the poor beast fell dead, and the stuffed skin was to be seen for many years in the library of that place.

of the fine old town of Prague. In the immediate vicinity of the city rises a hill, called the Weissenberg, or White-mountain; and beneath it is a splendid promenade, named the Star. At the foot of that mountain, which was destined to be the field where all the bright hopes then entertained were destroyed; and on the beautiful walk of the Star, soon to be drenched with the blood of many who then surrounded him in joy, and health, and high-souled expectation, the train of the young monarch halted, and was met by an immense concourse of the citizens, with the states and magistrates at their head. Two thousand horse escorted Frederic into the town; ambassadors from many other states were present; the nobility of the whole land assembled to do honour to their sovereign; and four hundred of the ancient Hussites, armed, after the fashion of the times of old, with hauberks of chain mail, with lances in hand, and double-handed swords on the back, formed a sort of body-guard, bearing in the midst the famous banner of the unconquerable Ziska, emblazoned with a cup soiled

and dusty from the many fields in which it had led on his fierce followers to the slaughter, but raising high hopes of conquest and success by the memory of past victories, and invincible resistance. The air rang with shouts; drums and trumpets sounded around; confidence, resolution, enthusiasm, were in every heart; and thus, in the midst of *lætitiæ publicæ*, as the mincing Camerarius calls it, was Frederic conducted into the capital of the kingdom, over which he was to reign but one short year.

The coronation of the King and the Queen shortly followed; and for a brief period all was joy, and pageantry, and success; but the reverse was speedily coming; the day-dream was quickly to be dispelled; and all the evils that the monarch's mother had foreseen, gathered, like thunder-clouds, around him.

At first, nothing could equal the popularity both of the King and Queen; her beauty, her grace, her kindness won all hearts; and the population, from high to low, almost worshipped her as she passed. The gentle demeanour of the King, too, conciliated regard.

His light and happy spirit shed sunshine round ; his dignified air and handsome person concealed the weakness of a character irresolute ; though personally brave ; and his happy language and easy eloquence covered, as is so frequently the case, the want of more important powers, judgment, and foresight, and discretion. Gradually, however, as events of great delicacy called for just and immediate action, the showy qualities were reduced to their right value in the minds of men ; the great deficiency of more sterling abilities became apparent. Then followed doubt and regret at the choice that had been made. Selfish interests raised themselves up to struggle for temporary advantages under a weak and facile prince. Gloomy discontent followed disappointment ; and apathy succeeded enthusiasm in his cause. Whenever such is the case, treason is not far behind. Still, all might have gone well, had a weak king been surrounded by wise friends ; had his counsellors, firm against his enemies, moderate with his supporters, imparted that vigour and that discretion to his actions which

his own character could not supply. Unfortunately, the exact reverse was the case. Camerarius was weak, though subtle, selfish, and interested ; Christian of Anhalt the elder, though a brave and skilful soldier, was little more than a soldier ; Dohna was suffered to take but little share in the management of affairs ; and the Prince of Solms was not equal to the great emergencies of the time. The man, however, who contributed more than all the rest to the ruin of his sovereign's prospects, was he who had urged him most strongly to accept the perilous position which he occupied. Filled with the wildest spirit of fanaticism, fancying himself the prophet of a new reformation, Abraham Scultetus came with the King into Bohemia ; utterly ignorant of the manners and customs of the people ; unacquainted even with the relations of the different religious parties into which the population was divided. The oppression of the Austrian princes had caused the Roman Catholics of the kingdom to join with their Protestant brethren in snatching the crown from the head of a prince,

whose own acts justified the States, under the express conditions which were made on receiving the sceptre, in declaring him fallen from the throne of Bohemia. But still there lingered a natural fondness in their minds for a sovereign of their own faith. These Roman Catholics formed a large part of the population, especially at Prague; the rest of the people were divided between the ancient Hussites, who were now comparatively few, and Lutherans, who were many. Of Calvinists, the number was exceedingly small. But Scultetus was one of the fiercest followers of the fierce and intolerant apostle of Geneva. Possessed with the blindest spirit of religious bigotry, he had done much evil, even in the Palatinate, where his sect was predominant; and he carried the same fiery elements of strife and confusion with him into the new kingdom which had fallen under his master's sway. His sermons were insults to the faith of almost all who surrounded him; his counsels were pernicious to the prince he served; and, after familiarizing himself in some degree with the

habits of the citizens of Prague, he proceeded to open acts of intolerance, which bore bitter fruits ere long. The cathedral was stripped of its pictures and its statues; the great altar itself was removed; and relics and images—which many of the citizens of Prague revered, not alone as mementos of holy men, but as part of the possessions of their city—were destroyed in the night, at his instigation. The great crucifix upon the bridge of Prague was also marked out for destruction; but several of the most eminent Bohemian nobles interfered, to prevent this rash act on the part of the King; and the cross and statue were spared accordingly. The report, however, of the intention spread far and wide through Prague. It unfortunately happened that the young Queen had some time previously expressed her determination never to pass over that bridge again, till the indecent practice of both sexes bathing indiscriminately in the river near, was done away. The real motives, which she had frankly expressed, were supposed by an angry and rude people to be a mere excuse; the Jesuits dexterously

contrived to point out the crucifix as the real object of her dislike ; and an outcry was raised against the unhappy Princess, which spread wide amongst the Roman Catholic population of the town.

Having once obtained cause of complaint, the Jesuits never ceased to decry the monarch, to pervert all his actions in the public ear, and to attribute the basest motives, and even the most licentious conduct, to one who had openly confessed himself an enemy of their church. With the serpent-like subtlety of their order, they spread poisonous rumours and calumnious assertions through a thousand different channels amongst the people of Bohemia. Sometimes it was an open and daring, but perverted statement in print, such as the "Description of the spoiling of the cathedral church at Prague by the Calvinistic King;" sometimes it was a mere whisper, such as that which spread amongst the Lutherans, that it was the determination of the King and Queen to abolish every form of worship in Bohemia but that which they themselves fol-

lowed. Doubts, fears, and enmities, took possession of the minds of the populace; and when the storms of war began to arise, and the young monarch required all the support of a united people, he found little but discord, disaffection, and suspicion.

In the mean while the relations of the new monarch of Bohemia with foreign powers were anything but satisfactory. True, indeed, his wife's uncle, the King of Denmark, the warlike King of Sweden, the Venetian Republic, and many princes of Germany recognised him at once as King of Bohemia. True, Bethlem Gabor, the Prince of Transylvania, promised the aid of his half savage hordes, in case of war; but James the First of England, on whose power to serve him much of his hopes had been founded, refused him even the title of King, treated him as a usurper, and would give no aid whatever in the preservation of the kingdom of Bohemia. He promised indeed to interfere, in case the Palatinate should be attacked; but Frederic had soon occasion to learn that his father-in-law was as false and

fickle, as he was vain and pusillanimous; and the only assistance he ever received from England, was afforded by the gallant enthusiasm of her young nobility in the cause of a princess whom they loved with chivalrous devotion. France, on the other side, temporized; for it was her policy to persecute the protestants amongst her own people, and to foment the divisions of Germany; and thus, in almost all instances, her interference in the affairs of the empire tended to weaken the Protestant League, and to give every facility to the Roman Catholics. Day by day and hour by hour, the storm approached nearer and nearer, menacing, on the one hand, Bohemia; and, on the other, the Palatinate. Large bodies of troops were raised in the Spanish Netherlands, in Burgundy, and Lorraine under the banners of the King of Spain; and at their head was placed the veteran, resolute, and skilful, but merciless Spinola; and on the side of Austria several generals of renown gathered together armies, ready to fall on Bohemia at the first sound of the drum.

In the mean time, in his capital of Prague, Frederic gave himself up alternately to revelry and devotion. The gallant manners of a refined court, the romantic tone, which it had acquired in the Palatinate, totally discordant with the rough plainness of Bohemia, were certainly reported, and perhaps believed to touch upon gross licentiousness; and, undoubtedly, in merriment—though there is no proof of its having been vicious—and in devout exercises—though they are not shown to have been hypocritical—Frederic passed much time which would have been more wisely expended in preparation for defence, or in active attack upon an enemy who no longer preserved even the semblance of amity. His acts also were weak and ill timed, his negotiations tedious and unskilful. From France, Denmark, and Venice, he received nothing but vague assurances of amity. From the King of Great Britain he obtained nought but the reproofs of a pedagogue, rather than the kind support of a father; and his embassy to Turkey only served to give his enemies a pretext for ac-

cusing him of leaguings with the infidel against the catholic emperor. Bethlem Gabor, indeed, not only promised, but prepared to espouse his cause; but history shows that so ill combined were the operations of the Transylvanians and Bohemians, that the Austrian troops had the opportunity of dealing with each separately, and paralyzing the one force before it could be supported by the other. On only one occasion after the accession of Frederic to the throne did the Bohemians and Transylvanians act in co-operation; and then, had perseverance and resolution been united to vehemence and activity, the imperial crown would, in all probability have been snatched from the House of Austria; and the Emperor would have remained a prisoner in the hands of his enemies.

The star of Frederic was not destined to rise high, however. He possessed, it is true, more amiable qualities than his rival; but Ferdinand not only displayed consummate skill, prudence, and activity himself; but had agents and counselors all equally shrewd, unscrupulous, and diligent. The Elector of Bavaria, nearly allied to the

Elector Palatine, had, beyond all doubt, given his cousin reason to believe that his acceptance of the crown of Bohemia would not be followed by any act of hostility on his part; but he had been educated in the same school as Ferdinand, was a bigoted follower of the Roman Catholic religion, the chief of the German Roman Catholic League, and the politic claimant, under old and baseless titles, of a great part of the young King's Rhenish dominions. These were fearful odds against gratitude and kindred, in the mind of a prince educated by the Jesuits. He was soon engaged heart and soul in the cause of the Emperor, and used every means, just and unjust, to move the princes of the League to act against Bohemia and the Palatinate.

Again, George Frederic, the Elector of Saxony, affected for a time to hold himself neutral; but that unworthy prince, it would seem, from the first leaned to the House of Austria, and was soon won over completely to the interests of Ferdinand. In all probability, jealousy at the Elector Palatine's elevation to the throne of Bohemia had a considerable

share in this decision; but at the same time it would appear that other means were employed to remove any hesitation from his course. Like many men of dissolute manners, he was greatly under the rule of fanatic preachers, who tolerated his vices upon the condition of governing his policy. The chief of these interested men was Matthew of Hoenegg, born an Austrian subject, the virulent rival and jealous enemy of Abraham Scultetus, of poor parentage and craving ambition. How he obtained it is not known, but a very large sum of money crowned his labours in some cause; and the Elector of Saxony pronounced in favour of the House of Austria. The Pope furnished considerable pecuniary means; the King of Spain ceased not his war-like preparations; the Elector Palatine was put under ban; and the princes of the Protestant Union acted in behalf of Frederic no farther than to give the Roman Catholic League a fair pretext for declaring war. The armies of the two rival religions were assembled at Donauwerth and Ulm, when France interfered to

promote a treaty of peace which left Bohemia defenceless. The Protestant princes agreed to confine their operations in support of the newly elected King to the Palatinate, while the war was to be fought out in Bohemia and lower Austria ; — and the unfortunate Frederic found himself suddenly exposed to the attack of the imperial troops and the army of the League, at a moment when his new kingdom was disaffected, Moravia and lower Austria overawed, and Lusatia, from which he expected strong reinforcements, invaded by the Elector of Saxony. The Danes remained neuter ; Bethlem Gabor was inactive ; the Swedes were engaged in war with Poland ; James of England gave no assistance, and France had just consummated the ruin of the young monarch's best hopes by the disgraceful treaty of Ulm.

The money, which was necessary to raise and maintain armies, had been squandered in revelry and unreasonable liberality. The affections of the people were estranged by the incapacity and the indiscreet fanaticism of the King and his court. The anger of the great

nobility of Bohemia was excited by the sight of foreigners, raised to the highest authority in the army and the state. Apprehensions and rumours were busy in the city of Prague. Treason was not inactive. No army sufficient to defend the capital was at hand; and the small force under the command of the gallant Christian of Anhalt, which was intended to impede the enemy's advance, was at a distance from the capital, and totally incapable of contending with the immense body advancing upon Bohemia, under Maximilian of Bavaria, and the Austrian general Bucquoy. With haste and great apprehension, Frederic collected troops from every quarter that would furnish them, as soon as he heard that the armies of the empire and the league had entered lower Austria, and that town after town was submitting to the enemy; while Christian of Anhalt, with less than ten thousand men at his disposal, was retreating before a force of nearly sixty thousand. A considerable body of troops was raised sooner than might have been expected, considering the state of the country; but

Counts Thurm and Schlick exerted themselves generously, in this emergency in support of their young King, notwithstanding some mortification at seeing the Prince of Hohenloe placed high in command. Count Mansfeld, on the contrary, who was already actively engaged in opposition to Austria, would not submit to that indignity, and he remained with his forces inactive at Pilsen, even while the fate of Bohemia was being decided under the walls of Prague.

Messengers, in the mean time, were sent off with all speed to Transylvania urging Bethlem Gabor to advance to the support of his ally ; and assurances were received that he would hasten with a large force to the aid of Frederic. That monarch, however, remained long in ignorance of the rapid advance of the Austrian and Bavarian troops ; till at the end of October, the despatches of the old Prince of Anhalt roused Frederic to a sense of his really perilous position. He heard now, that no towns resisted, however strong were their fortifications ; that the severities exercised in all places taken by assault had spread consternation every where, and that instant sub-

mission followed the appearance of the Bavarian banners under the walls of the Bohemian cities. Pilsen, indeed, promised to resist; and the works, strengthened by Mansfeld, were likely to set the enemy at defiance. Christian of Anhalt with his small force manœuvred in retreat, before the victorious armies; and, by the most skilful movements secured his own force, and kept the enemy in some degree at bay, affording time to the court of Prague for preparation. One small body of Hungarians, too, were approaching rapidly towards the capital; and some appearance of union and zeal, though it was but a hollow semblance, showed itself amongst the citizens of Prague.

It was under these circumstances, that Frederic, on the 2nd of November, left his capital to see, with his own eyes, the state of his army under the Prince of Anhalt; and, no sooner had he arrived, than the General took advantage of a temporary enthusiasm, created by the Prince's presence, to defend the post of Rakonitz against the Austrian forces under Bucquoy. The appearance of the sovereign on the field,

and the dauntless courage he displayed in the moment of danger, inspired his forces with fresh ardour, and raised him high in the opinions of the soldiery. Several times it became necessary to beseech him not to expose his person so rashly ; but Frederic remained in the hottest fire, notwithstanding all remonstrance, and undoubtedly greatly contributed to give the Imperialists that check which they received at Rakonitz. Christian of Anhalt was well aware that no results of importance could ensue from this skirmish. But Frederic vainly flattered himself that it might afford a favourable opportunity for specific negotiations ; and, having sent envoys to treat with the Duke of Bavaria, he returned to his capital, trusting that time, at all events, would be gained, and that, with an offer of peace before him, and Pilsen, with Manfeld's strong army, on the left, Maximilian at all events would halt to consider his position, if not absolutely fall back.

The Elector treated the proposal with scorn. Anhalt was obliged to retreat as soon as the Bavarians could co-operate with the Aus-

trians; and the only advantage obtained by the combat of Rakonitz was the gain of a march or two upon the allied force; so that the Bohemian army arrived under the walls of Prague, and took up its position on the Weissenberg in time to have strengthened itself by entrenchments, if the discipline of the soldiery had been equal to the skill and devotion of their commander.

A turbulent multitude were already in possession of the Weissenberg, when Christian of Anhalt appeared there likewise. Provisions were procured with difficulty. No subordination could be maintained. The citizens were murmuring at the unruly manners of the soldiery. Nobody in the town seemed aware that the enemy was so near the gates; and in vain Christian of Anhalt endeavoured to rouse either the monarch's court, the magistrates of the town, or the officers of the army, to a knowledge of their true danger, and the necessity of providing every means of resistance. Such was still the case on the evening of the 19th of November; and here I will conclude this brief sketch of the

political events which have necessarily interrupted the general course of my narrative.

It may be asked, what had become of Algernon Grey and Agnes Herbert during all this time? That question can be answered in very few words. Algernon had accompanied the court to Prague—had witnessed all the pageantry of the young monarch's triumphal entrance into his capital—had taken part in the early festivities of the time—and had been thrown by a thousand circumstances into the society of her he loved. Nor had it been possible for him to conceal from Agnes the passion which she had inspired. He had said nothing,—no, not a word,—he had done nothing, as far as he himself could judge, to show her that he loved her: and yet she did not doubt it. It was no longer a question with her,—she saw it, she felt it; and when at last she was obliged to confess to herself that she loved in return, a strange and agitating strife took place in her bosom for some time. But Agnes judged and acted differently from most women; and one bright autumn evening she sat down to con-

sider the character and conduct of Algernon Grey, and to draw deductions from that which she knew, regarding that of which she was doubtful. I will only tell the result. "He loves me," she said, "and he knows that I love him. But there is some obstacle, some difficulty—perhaps insurmountable. He is too honourable to trifle with my heart; he has not sought to mislead me. I cannot say that he has even sought to win affection, as some men do, to neglect it afterwards. Oh, no!—he has acted honestly; he has struggled with himself. I can see it all now; but I will trust in his honour, and while I veil my own feelings as much as may be, will believe that whatever he does is just and noble. I can live on in solitude, if I may love and honour him still."

Ere many weeks were past, Algernon Grey took leave of Agnes Herbert, to accompany the younger Prince Christian into Moravia, and never set his foot in Prague again till, after winning high renown in every skirmish and combat that took place, he accompanied Christian of Anhalt from Rakonitz in his retreat to the Weissenberg.

CHAPTER XII.

It was a dark and stormy night, that of the 19th of November, 1620, the eve of the twenty-third Sunday after Trinity; and clouds were rolling heavily over the sky, carried on by a keen and piercing wind which howled and whistled round the old battlements of Prague, and shook the lozenges in the long casements. Not a star was to be seen; the moon afforded not even that pale and uncertain light which she sometimes spreads over the general face of heaven, though her orb itself be hid beneath the vapoury canopy; and the only thing which chequered the darkness of the scene, was a light here and there in the windows of the straggling and irregular city—or a lantern,

moving up from the lower to the higher town, caught through a break in the narrow and tortuous streets.

Such was the aspect on the side of Prague ; but, upon the Weissenberg, a different scene was displayed. There, crowning the summit, was the camp of the Bohemian army ; and, between the tents and waggons, glowed many a watch-fire, to warm such of the soldiery as had no shelter provided for them, while lanterns, hung up before particular pavilions, at some distance from each other, marked the quarters of the leaders of that inharmonious and disjointed force. Thus the whole crest of the hill was in a blaze of light ; and a long line of fires ran down from the summit to the wide and beautiful promenade of the Star, marking the ground occupied by the wild Transylvanian horsemen. On the opposite side, towards Pilsen, a dark, black void extended ; Christian of Anhalt having strictly prohibited any of the parties to pitch their tents beyond the brow on that side. This order, at least, had been obeyed, though not so with any other he had given ;

and, indeed, the whole afternoon had passed in wrangling insubordination, which required the utmost exercise of his authority to repress it, and restore order ere nightfall. About six in the evening, indeed, an event had happened which in some degree seconded his exertions. The troops had previously been left nearly without food, and totally without wine; but the strong remonstrances of the General to the court of Prague, and the liberal use of his own purse amongst the sutlers of the town, had at length procured a supply of meat and bread, and a moderate quantity of wine. The distribution was immediately made, and, while the soldiery were engaged in eating and drinking, measures were taken by their officers for restoring discipline; so that, by nine of the clock, a greater degree of order was to be seen in the camp, and this night promised to pass over quietly.

It was about that hour when Algernon Grey gazed forth from his tent for a moment over the impressive scene always afforded by the night encampment of an army. As he looked

out, his eye ran over the several groups—rested upon the watch-fires—sped on, again, towards the Hungarian quarters, and then turned to the tents behind, and marked the different lines with a watchful and grave expression. From time to time he turned his head, and spoke a few words to some one within the tent, in broken and disjointed sentences — somewhat after the following form :—

“There must be twenty thousand, I think ; that is to say without counting the Hungarians. How many do they count ?”

“Twelve thousand,” said a deep voice from within.

“Not so many, I should imagine,” continued Algernon Grey. “Let me see—reckon ten men to a fire—there cannot be more than eight thousand, at the most. With such an army, one could do much, if there were but some bond between them, and we had something like discipline ; and yet, and yet, I very much doubt the result.”

“Where’s your cousin ? where’s Lovet ?” asked the voice again.

“He is gone into the town,” answered Algeron Grey, turning back into the tent, and seating himself at a small rude table, by the side of the young Prince of Anhalt. “To tell the truth,” he continued, “I am not sorry to be free from his presence: Lovet’s spirit is too light to accord with mine in such moments as these. I must and do feel these things deeply, Christian. I cannot forget the scene that we witnessed here just twelve months ago, nor avoid comparing them with that which Prague presents even now; menaced by a superior army, with no proper preparations for defence, with your father’s vast military skill fruitless to remedy faults of others, and the daring courage of yourself, and many like you, all cast away in the service of a prince unequal to the task he has assumed, and, I must add, little worthy of the crown which has been bestowed upon him.”

“There has been a sad change, indeed,” said the young Prince of Anhalt, in a gloomy tone; “and Frederic, I must own, has not shown himself fit for the crown he wears; but

still he has not many serious faults ; and there is one person, at least, worthy of every chivalrous exertion which noble-hearted men can make. I speak of your own fair Princess : faultless as beautiful, and brave as good. Would to God that she were our king ! but yet we must all confess that Frederic has had a difficult game to play."

"True," answered Algernon Grey ; "and he has played it badly. There never was, perhaps, a more united nation than these Bohemians when they raised the Elector Palatine to their throne. I mean, united heart and hand in that great act. Frederic owed his elevation not to a party in the State : the whole country was his party. You recollect the enthusiasm that awaited him wherever he appeared ; in the castle of the noble, in the streets of the city, amongst the cottages of the village. There was not a man to be found unwilling and unprepared to draw the sword in his cause. But now, in one short year, how changed has everything become : the bond of union is broken ; the united people is scattered into a

thousand parties ; and to what are we to attribute this ? In a great degree to his own weakness, I fear, and his own mistakes. It is a curious thing to consider how the destruction of great parties is effected, and I fancy that it is a question on which Frederic never meditated, though it was that on which depended the stability of his power. The man who yields to the mere prejudices of the body which raises him to high station, will not maintain it long, it is true ; but the man who resists the legitimate claims of that body is sure to fall very soon, for the disappointment of reasonable hopes is the seed of animosity, producing a bitter harvest. If it be dangerous to disappoint friends in their just demands, it is ten times more dangerous to encourage enemies, by endeavouring to conciliate them by any sacrifice of principle. Now Frederic has more or less incurred all these perils : in many respects he has yielded to the prejudices of the Bohemian people ; and yet he has disappointed the reasonable hopes of many. He has given encouragement to enemies, by weak efforts to pacify and conciliate them ; and, in short,

he has forgotten the maxim or the motto of an old leader in this very land, 'A friend to my friends, an enemy to my enemies, a lover of peace, but no fearer of war.' "

"Ay, there has been his mistake, indeed," replied his companion. "His should have been the aggressive policy, as soon as a single sword was drawn against him; it was no time for temporizing when he had taken a crown from an emperor's head, and an emperor armed to recover it. Leading the whole Bohemian people, who would then have followed him like a pack of wolves, he should have marched straight to the gates of Vienna, and dictated the terms of peace in the halls of the Imperial Palace to him who has grown strong by impunity, and whose only rights are in tyranny. Then, when Ferdinand of Grätz was quelled, should have come the turn of Maximilian of Bavaria; and, ere the treaty of Ulm had time to get dry, the Catholic League might have been annihilated. The greatest mistake that men make, is when they do not discover whether it be the time for energy or repose. But yet, I see not how it is that he has

disappointed the reasonable hopes and claims of the Bohemian people."

Algernon Grey smiled as the young Prince raised his eyes for a reply.

"We are friends, Christian," he said ; "now, old and tried friends, or I would not venture to say to you what I am about to utter. The Bohemians had a right to expect that the highest posts in the State and army should be bestowed upon themselves instead of upon foreigners ; but the reverse has been the case here. In the army what do you see ?"

"Why, in Heaven's name !" exclaimed Christian of Anhalt, "I see that there is not one man amongst them so well qualified to lead a host as my father."

"Undoubtedly not," answered Algernon Grey ; "but still the Bohemians have a right to complain that one of their own nobles was not selected for the task. Thurm and Schlick are both old and tried soldiers, with a high renown amongst their countrymen, and although as inferior to your father in every quality of a general as the meanest soldier is to them, yet,

depend upon it, they themselves, and the whole Bohemian people have felt it a slight, not alone to the two counts, but to the whole of Bohemia."

"Very true," said a voice at the entrance of the tent; "quite just and right, my young friend," and an elderly man, of strong and powerful frame, with a grey peaked beard, and a broad-brimmed hat upon his head, entered and grasped Algernon Grey familiarly by the shoulder. "The placing me over these men has been one of the King's greatest faults. Heaven knows, I did not seek it; had he given me but a corps of ten thousand men raised in the Palatinate, I could have done him better service, than leading the whole rabble of Bohemia. But I have come to seek you upon other matters—faults that can be mended, which this cannot."

"I hope none on my part, my noble Prince?"

"No, no," said the old soldier; "you do your duty well, and I shall beg you this night to let me have ten of your stout fellows to throw out a little way upon the high road. There is no knowing how soon the Bavarian may be

upon us ; he will let no grass grow beneath his horse's hoofs, for he knows as well as I do that if he do not fight a battle very soon, and win a victory, his men must starve. Could we but have stopped him at Pilsen, the game would have been in our hands ; but it could not be done without Mansfeld, and Mansfeld was jealous and would not act. But three days, but three days—it is all I could desire.” And the old general leaned his head upon his hand, and fell into deep thought.

“He cannot be here till Monday,” said Algernon Grey ; “we gained two marches on him.”

“To-morrow's sun will not set,” answered the Prince, “without seeing him under this hill, and if I could but get the men to work, we might yet set him at defiance, and let his host famish at our feet till they vanished away like the spring snow. But these people will do nothing ; all this afternoon has been wasted, so will to-morrow ; not a redoubt will be ready, nor a line. However, we must not blame them so much ; they are disheartened ; they hear of

nothing but disaster; they have little food themselves, and want their Prince's presence amongst them. Here he is scarcely ever with the army; his time is passed in revelry, devotion, pleasure, and preaching, turn by turn: now listening to the ravings of Scultetus, or looking into the eyes of Amilia of Solms, or tripping it in the dance, or listening to the drivelling of a jester. We must have him amongst us, my young friend, this very night, if it be possible; if not, very early to-morrow. I say not we shall lose the battle—God forbid!—but I say the only way to make them even stand to their colours is to give them their Prince's presence. Things look dark enough, and we must lose no chance. Frederic is fighting for a crown, and he must not mind the labours of a bloody day."

"He does not want courage, assuredly," replied Algernon Grey; "and I doubt not he will be here in the hour of danger."

"Nor I," answered the old Prince; "but for any moral effect he must be here before. He must show the men that he will live or die with them: then there is no fear; for, if he once displays

energy, the disaffected in yon town will fear to show their heads; and should we be driven from our position on this hill, the guns from Prague will still protect us, or the walls of Prague shelter us.—But, now, to what brings me hither. I have thought to-night that we must move the Queen to send her husband hither, and I have considered how this can best be done; with the King I have tried all means. The task must fall upon you, my young friend; you are her countryman, of high rank and station in your own land, have distinguished yourself in her husband's service, and for twelve months have exposed your person and employed your means in upholding his throne, without any reward but honour. You must go to her—must see her—must urge upon her the necessity of the case. He is now revelling, and will be so employed till twelve; get on your horse then at once, and see what can be done.”

“But, indeed, General,” said Algernon Grey, “I must have some authority for this; otherwise, in the first place, I may not obtain admission to the Queen, and if I do, she may look upon my interference as gross impertinence.”

“ Authority!” said the bluff old Prince, “ here it is. I knew what you would say, and therefore wrote these few words, namely, ‘ Your Majesty will credit all that is said to you by Algernon Grey, on the part of your devoted servant, Christian of Anhalt.’ The rest I must leave to your eloquence; and now, if you would save the army, away with all speed and use your best endeavours.”

Algernon Grey cast down his eyes and meditated for several moments. “ It is a delicate task,” he said at length, “ a very delicate task, General; first, to speak to a wife on the conduct of her husband; next, to speak to a subject on the conduct of her King; for, though she is Queen, still she is his subject; and more than all, to talk to one so placed as she is, of the faults of him whom she is bound to honour, and does love.—My noble Prince, I would fain not undertake it. If there be any one in all your camp whom you can trust with this same sad and perilous errand, I do beseech you put it not upon me.”

The old Prince of Anhalt took him by both

hands and grasped them hard: "Your very sense of the difficulty and importance of the bitter task," he said, "is proof enough that there is no one so fitted for it as yourself. I do beseech you, my friend, undertake it. If you would save this realm; if you would preserve the crown for the Elector Frederic; if you would rescue from ruin that sweet lady whom we all love and serve; if you would avert evils innumerable, massacre, torture, persecution, the overthrow of the pure faith in this kingdom, go about the task at once; make one last effort for our only hope of victory; and then, let the result be what it may, lay down your head in peace, knowing that you, at least, have done your best."

Algernon Grey wrung his hand hard. "I will go, noble old man," he said, "I will go; though it cost me one of the bitterest pangs that my heart has ever felt; though it may be the cause of much after-sorrow, I will go. It shall not be said that anything was wanting on my side, to support the part I have espoused."

"Thanks, thanks!" cried the old Prince of

Anhalt. "Ho, without there! Bring up Master Algernon Grey's horse, quick!" "My lord," he continued, "God knows whether any of us here will see the end of to-morrow. Ere you return I shall have lain down to take one sort of sleep, which, before the next day's sunset, may be changed for another kind. If we never meet again, remember I die grateful to you for this act and many others. A better soldier never lived than you have shown yourself under me; and old Christian of Anhalt, having seen some fields in his days, may be as good a judge of such things as many men. But, above all, I thank you for that which you are now going to do. I know how bitter it is, and that you would rather meet a hundred enemies with lance in hand than this fair lady, on such an errand as that which you go upon. But it is for the advancement of the cause—for its salvation, I might say; and I know that is enough for you. Do not bring me any message back. I should be sorry to be refused with court words, and if he comes, that will be sufficient answer."

"What is the pass-word at the gates, my

lord?" asked Algernon Grey, as he heard a horse trotted up.

"The crown," answered the old General. "Now, away, away! What do you keep him for, boy?"

"Tell the Queen," said young Christian of Anhalt, who had caught his friend by the arm, "that if there be a battle to-morrow I will carry her glove into the midst of the enemy's host and bring her back news of victory, or not return at all."

"She will believe you, Christian," replied Algernon Grey. "Farewell for the present: I shall see you again;" and, turning away, he quitted the tent and mounted his horse.

"I and Frill will run beside you, noble sir," said the young gentleman's servant, Tony, as he held the stirrup; "I would not have any more horses out, for the poor beasts are tired, and I have a shrewd notion that they may be wanted to-morrow. Whither do you speed, sir?"

"To the town and to the palace," answered his master, briefly; and, riding on with the stout

servant on one side of his horse, and the page on the other, he reached the gates of Prague in about a quarter of an hour.

Dull and gloomy was the scene under the archway, where, with nought but a wicket open, some half-dozen men, armed with corslets, salad, and partisan, kept guard by a large fire, which threw a lurid glare over the heavy masses of stonework. The towers of the gate rose high on either side; the dark arch frowned above; and through the aperture beyond appeared nought but a faint glimpse of a small irregular place d'armes, and a long, black-looking street leading into the town.

"Who comes here?" cried a soldier, as Algernon Grey approached; and at the same time a partisan was dropped to his horse's poitral.

"A friend," replied the young gentleman—"The crown!"

"Welcome, friend! Pass the crown," answered the soldier; and the gates were instantly thrown open to give him admission.

Taking his way slowly along the dim streets,

Algernon Grey mounted towards the palace, and at length reached the open space before the vast old building called the Hradschin, where the court of Bohemia was then lodged. In many of the windows there was a light ; but from one long line of casements a broad glare poured forth upon the night ; and he could not but feel some bitterness of spirit as he thought that there Frederic was holding a senseless revel, when his friends and his soldiers were encamped without, waiting in privation and hardship the attack of a superior enemy.

Giving his horse to the servant with orders to wait there till he returned, and his sword to the page with directions to follow him, the young cavalier approached the gates of the palace, entered the first court, and mounted the steps on the left. Some guards before the gates demanded the pass-word ; and the attendants within made many difficulties when they heard that he sought an audience of the Queen. One of them said at length, however, shrugging his shoulders and turning away, that the Queen was ill in bed. Algernon Grey, without losing tem-

per, demanded to see any of her ladies. "The Princess Amelia of Solms," he said, "the Countess of Loewenstein, or any of them."

"I will go and see," answered the man, who, it seemed, did not know the visitor; and the young Englishman was detained in the entrance-hall fully ten minutes before he received any reply to his application. During that time a number of richly dressed servants passed and repassed, carrying large silver dishes, gilt flagons of wine, and plates of sweetmeats; but at length the attendant to whom he had spoken returned, and, in a much more deferential tone, requested him to follow. Leaving the page below, he accompanied his guide up one of the many staircases of the building, through a long corridor, down two or three steps, along another narrow passage, and then across a large sort of vestibule supported by heavy stone pillars. At the farther side of this hall the servant threw open a door, desiring Algernon Grey to enter, and saying, "One of the ladies will come to you in a moment, sir."

Algernon Grey gazed around. The aspect

of the chamber was certainly not fitted to raise any very cheerful thoughts. There were splendid draperies and hangings, it is true, but of dull and cheerless colours ; and the rest of the furniture, though richly gilt, was rude in its forms, and antique in its fashion. One solitary sconce was lighted, projecting through the arras from a long limb of gilded iron ; and as he marked the faint light striving to penetrate the gloom, and the rays losing themselves in the deep hues of the drapery, he thought, " Thus shine the hopes of Bohemia."

The moment after, he heard a door creak on the right-hand side of the room, and, turning round, saw the tapestry quickly pushed back.

CHAPTER XIII.

“AGNES!” exclaimed Algernon Grey, advancing to meet her, whom he had not seen for so many months; “this is, indeed, a pleasure.”

The colour varied in the fair girl’s cheek, spreading wide and fading away again, like the light of a summer sunset; but, without reserve or coldness, she came forward towards him, holding out her hand with a glad smile:—
“How long it is since we met!” she cried;
“and now we meet at a strange moment.”

“A strange moment, indeed, and a terrible one, I fear; for we are on the eve of a great battle, Agnes,” he replied. “The result is with God alone; but yet, as far as human foresight

can calculate upon things always most uncertain, there is much reason to fear that the event will not be a happy one."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Agnes, gazing at him with a sad, but deeply interested look; "it is terrible enough to think of so many of our fellow-creatures meeting to shed their blood, without having to anticipate the disaster of defeat likewise. But they told me there were five-and-thirty thousand men, protected by the guns of Prague—a powerful artillery—a great and skilful general."

"The numbers I cannot justly estimate," replied Algernon Grey; "the guns of Prague can be of no service, Agnes, except as protection in case of defeat. The general, it is true, is most skilful; but his soldiers are in-subordinate; his army full of incoherent parts; his officers divided in counsel, and each thinking he can judge better than his commander; the troops themselves depressed in spirits by want and fatigue, and a long, harassing retreat; the small force which has already fought the enemy having no confidence in, and no bond of union

with, the new levies, which seem to me but heterogeneous masses, different in discipline and in character. It is all this that makes me dread the result. But I am sent to the Queen, dear Agnes, to urge her strongly upon some points of great interest to the welfare of her husband and herself. Good old Prince Christian of Anhalt chose me for this task, as her countryman ; and, though it is a painful one to perform, yet it must be done."

"She knows there is some one here from the Prince of Anhalt," replied Agnes Herbert ; "but she is ill, and in bed. She sent me down to say that she could see no one, were it not on business of life and death ; and I came, not knowing who it was I should find."

"This is business of life and death, sweet friend," replied Algernon Grey ; "and, if it be possible, I must see her. The King, I fear, is revelling ; and, besides, the appeal must now be made to the Queen herself."

"He has a great banquet to-night," replied Agnes Herbert, with the colour somewhat

mounting in her cheek. "I do not think he believes the peril so imminent."

"He is wrong," answered Algernon Grey; "for he has had warning enough;—but speed back to the Queen, dear lady; tell her that I come on matters of deep moment; show her this letter from the Prince, and, if possible, obtain me an audience. At all events, return to me for a moment yourself, Agnes, for there is a word or two that I would fain speak before an event occurs which may change the whole face of every one's destiny in the army and in the court."

"Oh, yes! I will return," replied Agnes Herbert, with a quivering lip and drooping eyelids; "but I will go now and do my best to gain what you desire."

He took her hand and kissed it; then let her go; and, in a moment, he was once more alone. She was not long absent, however; for in two or three minutes the tapestry again moved back, and Agnes re-appeared, with a glad smile, saying, "The Queen will rise and

see you. As soon as she is up, she will send some one to tell us."

"Then let me not lose the present moment," said Algernon Grey. "In some things, my conduct must have seemed strange to you, Agnes,—I am sure it has."

Agnes looked down, with a pale cheek, and made no reply.

"There are secrets in most men's history," continued Algernon Grey; "and there are some sad ones in mine, sweet friend. Events have taken place which shackle my spirit and heart more heavily than fetters of iron could my limbs. There is not time, at present, to tell you the whole tale; but, if I live beyond this next battle, all shall be explained."

"Indeed, I seek no explanation," said Agnes Herbert, laying her hand gently on his arm; "I have seen much of you; I know you, I think, Algernon, to the heart. My trust in your honour and your honesty is unbounded; and nothing shall ever make me believe that you are in the wrong, though you may be

unfortunate. I am contented with this conviction, and ask no more."

"Nevertheless," answered Algernon Grey, pressing his lips again and again upon her hand, "if I live, I will tell you all, whatever be the result. But there is one thing you must promise me, dear Agnes, if you have in me that confidence you say."

"I have, I have," she answered eagerly; "and I will do anything that is right to prove it to you. Only say what it is you would have."

Her lover held her by the hand, and gazed into her eyes with a look of deep and tender interest, mournfully, yet not without happiness; for there is a bright consolation in mutual trust, which lights up the darkest hour of life with a gleam like the sunshine on a cloud. "What I would have you to do, is this, dear Agnes," he said: "the event of the battle is, of course, doubtful, and the consequences may be such as I dread to think of. The army, or a part of it, may be driven to retreat into Prague, there to be besieged by a superior force. What will

follow then it is difficult to foresee. The town, at all events, will be in a state of turbulence and misrule. It may have to capitulate; it may even be taken by assault; but you must promise that, if I survive the battle, which I somehow have a presentiment will be the case, you will trust in me entirely, as if I were a brother; that you will follow my counsels, be ready to answer to my call at any moment, when I judge your escape practicable. I ask you to trust in me fully, totally, and entirely; and, on my word of honour as a man, a gentleman, and a Christian, I assure you, you may do so without any doubt or hesitation, whatever be the circumstances into which your compliance may throw us towards each other. In the hour of peril and of difficulty, Agnes—my duty done as a soldier—my only thought will be of you.”

“I will, Algernon, I will,” answered Agnes Herbert. “Under such circumstances our poor Princess will have enough to think of and to do, without caring for me; and I will not only trust to you, but will show you how I trust, by

seeking your counsel, your aid, or your protection, whenever I find it needful.—But yet do not suppose that I shall give way weakly to fear. What you say certainly alarms me. I know that such views of imminent peril are not entertained here; and this is the first time that I have heard it clearly stated that danger is at the doors. It takes me, therefore, by surprise; but yet it does not terrify me as much as might be expected. I have a confidence that cannot be shaken; a rock of trust, whose foundations are sure; and, although I speak not about such things as much as many in this court, yet my reliance on the mercy and goodness of God keeps me calm even now, and will, I trust, do so should the evils fall on me that we anticipate. I am not so light and thoughtless as people have believed—perhaps, as I have believed myself; for I feel my courage rise against what some time ago I should have thought would overwhelm me. I can endure, if I cannot resist; and I feel full confidence that help will come when it is needed; that resolution will not fail; and that, if I have to

depend upon you for support and guidance, no vain terrors, on my part, will shackle your energies, no weak hesitation or delay impede your actions, or frustrate your views."

"Noble—noble girl," cried Algernon Grey, pressing her hand in his; "methinks, with you by my side, I could dare and defy a world."

As he spoke, the same door by which Agnes had entered opened again, and a woman appeared, in the dress of a superior servant. She addressed herself to Agnes at once, saying, "Her Majesty sent me, Madam, to tell you that she is ready now to receive the gentleman you mentioned."

"Come, then," said Agnes, turning to Algernon Grey, "I will show you the way;" and, leading him through the same door, she passed a little ante-chamber, and then mounted a flight of ten narrow steps, which conducted to a small room with a door half open, entering into a larger one. All was perfectly still, but a bright light came from the inner chamber; and, making Algernon Grey a sign to stay there for a moment, Agnes advanced and went in. The

next instant she appeared at the door again, beckoning him to come forward, and three steps brought him into a large room, containing a bed beneath a canopy of crimson and gold, with various other articles of rich furniture, on which the arms of Bohemia were frequently emblazoned. A large fire was burning on the wide hearth, and a single lamp on a table shed a faint light through the chamber, showing a large velvet chair before the chimney, with the form of Elizabeth of Bohemia seated therein, wrapped in a loose dressing-gown of satin trimmed with fur.

Algernon Grey advanced to the side of the young Queen, behind whose seat two German women were standing; and, bowing the head reverently, he took the hand she extended towards him, and bent his head over it.

A few moments passed in the ceremonious courtesies of the day, Elizabeth asking news of his health, and how he had fared in the camp, and the young Englishman answering with many professions of devotion to her cause and person. But then began the more difficult, but

more important portion of their conversation, the Queen breaking off at length somewhat abruptly, as if impatient curiosity mastered her, and inquiring, "Well, what message has our good cousin, Prince Christian of Anhalt, sent us, my lord?—something of importance, doubtless, or he would have chosen another hour and a less distinguished messenger!"

"It is for your Majesty's private ear," answered Algernon Grey; "and we have here many to listen."

"None but our sweet Agnes understands our English tongue, my lord," replied the Queen; "and I have no secrets from her, nor, perhaps, have you either."

"This is none of mine, your Majesty," he said; "but still I doubt not she may well be a partaker thereof, if you are certain that these two other ladies are not likely to gather the substance."

"Not a word of it," cried the Queen; "speak—speak freely."

Algernon would have felt great relief if the royal lady had but uttered one word which

could lead naturally to the painful subject he had to discuss. Elizabeth, however, whose high courage with difficulty grasped the idea of danger, even when it was presented to her, was not one to foresee it when it was at all remote and uncertain; and, as she said nought which could fairly open the subject, he was obliged to plunge into it at once abruptly. "Your Majesty has read the letter of the Prince of Anhalt," he said (Elizabeth nodded her head). "From that you must be satisfied that nothing but the most immediate necessity," continued the young Englishman; "nothing but the most imminent danger, I might say, would have induced him to send me hither at such a time. But, Madam, the peril is imminent, the necessity is great; and though with deep pain I undertook the task, yet I would not refuse any thing that might be serviceable to your Majesty."

When first he began to speak, Elizabeth had remained with her head somewhat bent, and her eyes fixed upon the fire; but, as he uttered the last words, she turned quickly round, and

gazed at him with a flushed cheek and quivering lip. "What is this that you tell me, my lord?" she cried, in a tone of great surprise. "I must have been kept in ignorance—and yet I cannot believe that there is such danger as your words imply, or that it is near. By looking far forward for perils, we often make them, and always needlessly disturb and agitate ourselves. The mariner who gazes at every distant wave, and strives to avoid it, thinking it will overwhelm him, will hold the helm with no steady hand, and, very likely, run his boat upon a rock, to avoid that evil which God's good will and a thousand accidents may carry wide away and never bring it near."

"Let me represent to your Majesty, firmly, though humbly," said Algernon Grey, "that this peril is not distant; this wave, this dark and terrible wave, is already rearing its crest over the prow of your royal bark. It is near at hand, and the only thing for those who love and serve you is to consider how it may be met or avoided. The enemy are marching rapidly on Prague, an immediate battle must ensue, and——"

"Have we not troops?" exclaimed Elizabeth; "is there not a royal army encamped on yon hill?—are there no walls, no cannon, around Prague?" And then, suddenly bending down her head, she pressed her hand upon her eyes for an instant, but continued, before Algernon Grey could answer, "What is it you would say, my lord? I do believe you love me; I know that there is not a bolder heart in Europe. Something must have gone strangely amiss to bring you here with such auguries of mischance. Surely the enemy is not near? When last I heard he was at six days' march. Or can the troops be unfaithful? Brave they have always shown themselves. Can the pestilential treasons which have been hatching in this town have spread beyond the gates to them?"

"No, madam, I trust not," answered Algernon Grey; "but you are deceived as to the enemy's distance. By the most skilful ^{stratagem} ~~strategy~~ the Prince of Anhalt has gained one march, or at most two, upon the enemy; the last tidings, however, show the Austrians and Bavarians in full march for Prague; to-morrow will certainly

*A donkey made that
"amendment"*

see them beneath its walls. A battle cannot be delayed beyond one day more—perhaps not so long. Now, let us see what we have to count upon in this battle. Under Buquoy and Maximilian of Bavaria march fifty thousand men, all veteran, subordinate, well-disciplined soldiers; without counting the force detached under Wallenstein and others to keep Pilsen in check. Forty heavy pieces of artillery accompany this force, and the cavalry is strong and numerous. Under the walls of Prague now lie for its defence some five-and-thirty thousand men, at the utmost computation, with ten small guns. This in itself is a sad disparity; but yet, under ordinary circumstances, it would by no means render the case a hopeless one. A handful of men has often defeated a host, but then that spirit must be with them which is better than all the ordnance that ever poured death upon the foe. Is that spirit amongst your Majesty's troops?"

He paused for a moment, for Elizabeth made a motion with her hand, as if begging him to

cease and let her think ; but, after a brief space, she said, in a low voice, “ Go on, go on ! I must hear all—spare nothing, my lord ; say every word ! ”

“ It grieves me, madam, but it is my duty to your Majesty,” answered Algernon Grey. “ The disparity, then, between the numbers of the two armies is rendered greater by the moral state of each. Your troops are faithful, I do believe ; but see what a difference exists between them and the enemy : the latter are coming up with the force and energy of attack, and the prestige of victory ; yours have, in great part, been waiting long, hearing of defeat, troubled with rumours of towns taken and their fellows butchered ; receiving retreating troops amongst them, learning to look with apprehension for attack, rather than to rush with ardour to assail. Thus their courage has been lowered, their enthusiasm drowned, their resolution shaken.”

“ But how could this have been avoided ? ” exclaimed the Queen. “ You seem to blame the measures that have been taken.”

“I would reply, Madam, that it is with the future, not the past, we have to do,” answered Algernon Grey; “but that from the past we may judge what is necessary for the present moment. I will, then, blame the measures that have been taken; for they have been suggested to his Majesty by civilians as ignorant of what is needful for the defence of a kingdom as any priest in a country parish. The defensive policy which has been assumed was not the policy for Bohemia. That policy was to attack as soon as the Emperor began the war—to prevent the concentration of his forces—to cut through his alliances—to gain friends and daunt adversaries by winning the first successes of the strife. That time has passed by: yet much may be retrieved if we can but win this battle; and the first means of so doing is to restore some moral tone to the soldiery. The army is faithful; but there is a great difference between being faithful and being zealous. The troops are not zealous. Time—delay—reverses—neglect—fatigue—privation—have all cooled them. His Majesty’s own continued absence

from the army has cooled them also. Forgive me, Madam, if I have seemed to speak irreverently, and even unfeelingly ; but I will show you a reason for it presently. These men, fighting continually against superior forces, driven from camp to camp, and only making a stand where the ground greatly favoured them, subjected to all sorts of privations, and wearied to death with marches, have heard of feasting and pageantry at Prague, but no preparations for their support ; have heard of preaching and long prayers, but not of levies and trainings, and forces in the field to aid them. They have seen the enemy every day—their King only once.”

“ Oh, cease ! cease ! ” cried Elizabeth, clasping her hands together. “ I have seen it ; I have felt it. I have known right well that this is not the way to win or keep a crown. It is sad ; it is — But, no, no ; I must not speak such things : I must not even think them. He is my husband—good, noble, brave ; but too lightly, too easily persuaded. I have been ill, too, myself—am little fitted for active exertion

even now; but yet, tell me what you desire—tell me what Christian of Anhalt judges needful for the security of the present moment.”

“The immediate presence of the King in the camp,” answered Algernon Grey. “Let him show himself to the soldiery—let him take part in their labours and their dangers—let him command, lead, encourage, as he did at Rakonitz. Their enthusiasm in his cause will revive; their courage and their zeal will mount together. With that hill for our position, and these cannon for our support, we will win the victory, or die to the last man.”

Elizabeth started up, and grasped his hand in hers. “He shall come,” she said: “if I am a king’s daughter and a king’s wife, he shall come. Early in the morning he shall be with his troops, if my voice have not lost all power over him. And now go, my friend. Agnes, you lead him down. Yet, stay one moment. There is never any knowing what may happen in this life of change. Should the terrible disasters which our worst fears paint, befall us, all will be confusion here. My lord, I tremble for some

of these poor things who have accompanied me to Prague. Let me provide defence for one of them. You will take care of my poor Agnes?— is it not so? You are her father's friend. You love her well, I know. You will protect her in the hour of need?"

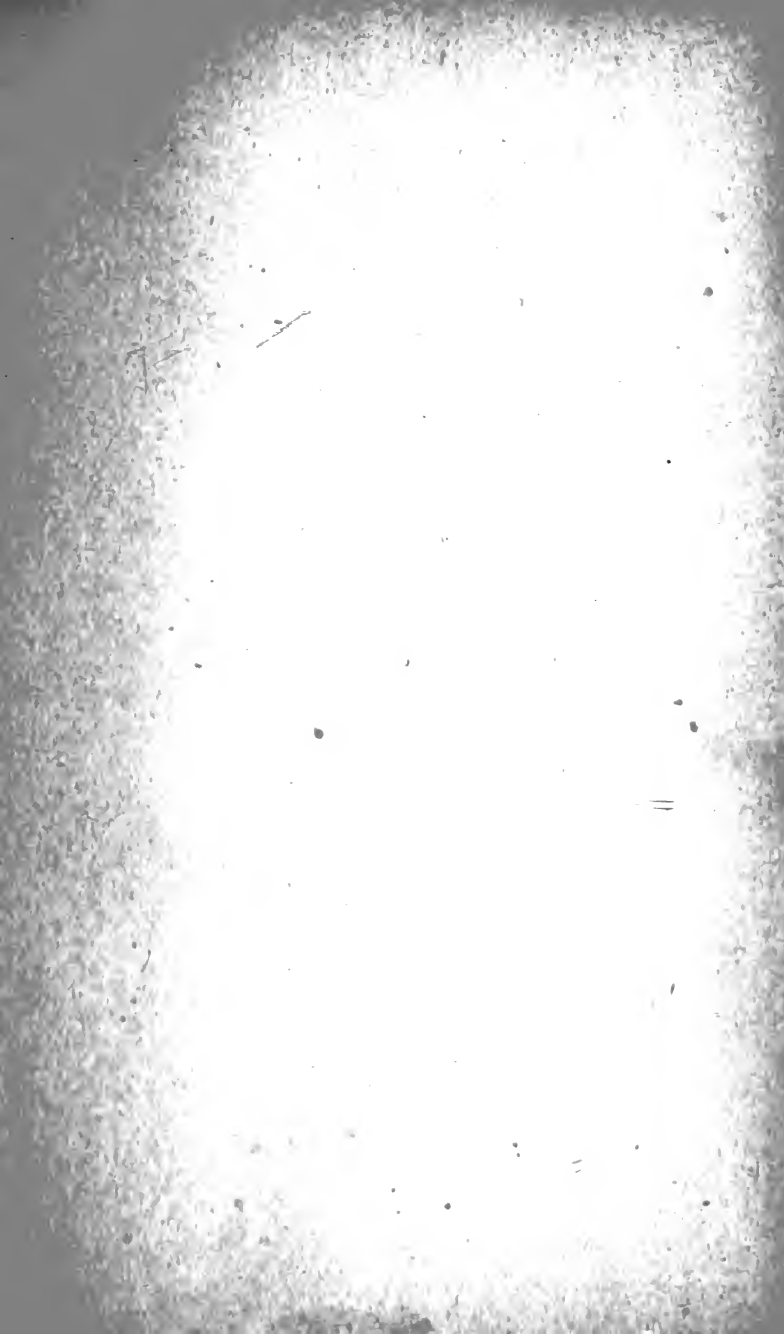
"If I survive, I will protect her as a brother," answered Algernon Grey, "till I give up the charge to her good uncle at Heidelberg."

"Enough, enough," said the Queen. "Now go. You have spoken hardly, my lord, but kindly, I do believe; and I thank you from my heart for opening eyes which have been closed too long. Lead him down, my Agnes."

Algernon Grey bowed low, and withdrew.









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